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Alekhine Defense

A Complete Guide



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Alekhine Defense: A Complete Guide
by Maxim Chetverik and Nikolay Kalinichenko

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Introduction

'Just like King Midas, who was endowed with the power to turn everything he touched to gold, Alekhine, the Russian maestro, has the same magical touch in the opening—his audacious and incredible knight move pursues a particular aim—breaking down White's pawn chain, which pays off in the endgame.

The Alekhine Defense is a peculiar mix of open and semi-open systems. Initially, Black obliges by letting his knight get kicked around by e5, d4, c4, and f4, responding with ♘g8-f6-d5-b6. White gets comfortable in the center, but then Black starts chipping away at White's pawn chain (with d7-d6, ♘c6, etc.) and eventually, the tables are turned. **Now White has to fight tool and nail to maintain his initiative.**'

Savielly Tartakower began his magnificent work entitled The Hypermodern Chess Game with those two eloquently written paragraphs, thereby signifying that the author attached a particular importance to the Alekhine Defense. We recommend you take a look at Tartakower's analysis of 1.e4 Nf6, viewing our historical background section and his comments as two entries on early chess theory and history. Now we have to move onto some more dry material.

Like the authors' previous book, An Encyclopedia on the Dutch Defense, this volume includes a theoretical section with illustrative games (exactly 100 of them). The book's 87 chapters have been broken down into 16 separate parts. Not every chapter contains commentated games; however, those chapters covering the hottest lines may have two or three, each of them providing extensive analysis and numerous lines from other games. The move order has been modified in certain cases to present the material in a more coherent manner; luckily, one can dissect the Alekhine Defense's constituent parts without sacrificing continuity, as it is such a flexible and ingenuous opening system.

Historical Background

The Alekhine Defense is a strange progeny of 20th century. According to the Megabase, Black only attacked White's king pawn with his knight (1... Nf6) two times during the 19th century. The first encounter of its kind is rather comical — Madame de Remusat – Napoleon Bonaparte, Paris 1802. Madame shied away from the principled 2.e5 in favor of 2.d3. The French emperor lured the white king into the center of the board by sacrificing two pieces and he mated the poor monarch on move 13. The title of Chase's detective novel, Believe This — You'll Believe Anything, probably most aptly describes Napoleon's triumph.

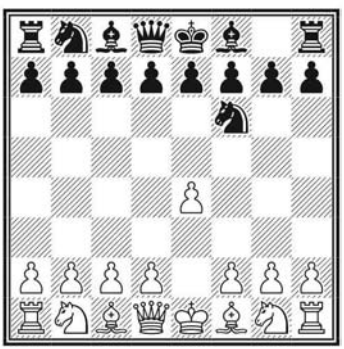
Johann Allgaier mentions 1...Nf6 in his 1811 textbook on chess. No practical games were referenced, though. It is known that in 1860 the Edinburgh Chess Club employed this odd opening against the Berwick Chess Club in a correspondence game. Only was it in 1893 that two American masters, Hanham and Delmar, played something vaguely resembling a modern opening system: 2.Nc3 d5 3.e5 d4 4.ef dc 5.fe cd+ 6.♗xd2 ♕xe7+ 7.♕e2 ♗e6, etc. Aron Nimzowitsch won a funny little game against Adolf Albin twelve years later. Let us take this opportunity to consider this sideline in the Alekhine Defense (and never return to it again for serious analysis). De-facto, this line is not a part of the real Alekhine Defense.

Game 1

A.Nimzowitsch – A.Albin

Vienna 1905

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6



'A theoretically innocent attempt, not the Klyatskin variation' (Nimzowitsch). One should note that in 1905 Mikhail Klyatskin, a chess player from Moscow, was only eight years old, and he introduced 1...♘f6 into his repertoire slightly earlier than Alekhine himself. Luckily enough, Klyatskin's legacy did not fade into oblivion, but 'the Alekhine Defense' is a fairer name than 'the Klyatskin Defense'.

2. e4-e5 ♘f6-g8?!

It is hard to believe that the potentially vulnerable far-advanced

e-pawn adequately compensates for this tempo loss. Retreating to the back rank never gained popularity, remaining an opening experiment. Centralizing the knight by playing 2...♘e4?! is risky relative to 2.♘c3 d5 3.e5 ♘e4. For instance, after 3.d4 f6 4.♗d3 d5 5.f3 ♘g5 6.♘e2 it is unclear how Black will develop his pieces, while White can meet 3... e6 with the promising 4.♘h3!.

3.d3, as well as 3.d4, gives White an advantage. It is hard not to shed a tear looking at Black's position after 3...♘c5 4.d4 ♘ca6 5.♘f3 d6 6.♗c4 e6 7.0-0 de 8.♘xe5 ♗d6 9.♕g4 ♗xe5?! 10.de ♔f8 11.♗g5 ♕e8 12.♘c3 Bakhmatov – Heinrichs, Nettetal 2010. After 4...♘e6 5.d5 ♘c5 6.b4 ♘ca6 the overworked horsy also finds itself on the brim, but the position is not so clear because Black can undermine White's center with 7.a3 d6 8.♗e3 c6. 5.f4!? g6 6.d5 ♘c5 7.♗e3 d6 8.♗d4 f6 (Moroz – Vavra, Pardubice 1998) 9.e6 c6 10.c4 is worth considering.

John Watson and Eric Schiller have dubbed the 2...♘e4 continuation the Mokele Mbembe variation. One can only wonder how these two American chess theorists drew a parallel between Nessi's relative in Africa and an opening variation.

3. d2-d4 d7-d5

The 3...d5 and 3...d6 sidelines run together if an exchange on d6 occurs. After 4.ed ♕xd6 5.♘c3 we arrive at a transposed Scandinavian Defense (1.e4 d5 2.ed ♕xd5 3.♘c3 ♕d6 4.d4). 5.♘f3, looking to redirect the queen's knight to c4, is more flexible.

Perhaps, 3...d6 is best for Black, all things considered. If 4.♘f3 de 5.♘xe5 ♘d7 (if 2...♘d5 3.d4 d6 4.♘f3 de 5.♘xe5 ♘d7 White would sacrifice on f7...) 6.♗d3 (or 6.♕f3 ♘xe5 7.de c6 8.♘c3 ♕a5 9.♗f4 g5!? 10.♗xg5 ♕xe5+ 11.♕e3 ♗g7 with a manageable position for Black) 6...♘gf6 7.♘d2 c5 8.♘df3 cd 9.♕e2 ♘xe5 10.♘xe5 a6 11.♗g5 h6 12.♗h4 ♕a5+ 13.c3 e6 14.0-0, and the sacrificed material is roughly worth the initiative, Grandelius – Fries Nielsen, Lund 2011. 10.♕xe5, followed by winning back the pawn, guarantees White a small yet stable advantage.

Magnus Carlsen, seemingly recalling his younger days, returned his knight to the back rank, instead of centralizing it, in his blitz game against Fressinet (Dubai 2014). After 4.♘f3 c6 5.h3 ♗f5 6.♗d3 ♗xd3 7.♕xd3 de 8.♘xe5 ♘d7 9.♗f4 ♘gf6 10.♘c3 ♘xe5 11.♗xe5 e6 12.0-0-0 ♗e7 13.♔b1 0-0 14.♕g3 ♘h5 15.♕f3 ♘f6 the French GM shied away from repeating moves. Instead, he charged on (16.h4!?), and eventually lost. Overall, Black does not have any weaknesses or chances at usurping the initiative.

4. ♗f1-d3 ...

4.c4!? is more decisive. By opting against undermining the d4+e5

pawn duo Black may find himself in a critical position. For instance, 4... c6 5.♘c3 ♗e6 6.♘ge2 dc4 7.♘f4 ♕c8 8.♗e3 ♗f5?! (Black should have redirected his knight to this square via h6) 9.♗xc4 e6 10.g4 ♗g6 11.h4 ♗b4 12.f3 b5 13.♗b3 Ponizil – Krajina, Ostrava 2010.

4. ... e7-e6

It is unwise of Albin to neglect putting some pressure on d4. An interesting continuation could follow: 4...c5 5.c3 ♘c6 6.♘e2 ♗g4 7.f3 (7.♗e3!?) 7...♗d7 8.♗e3 ♕b6 9.dc ♕xb2 10.e6!? fe 11.♘d2 ♕a3 12.♖b1 ♖b8 13.0-0.

5. ♘g1-e2 ...

Nimzowitsch aims to activate his queen as he does in his variation of the French Defense (1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.♕g4). This would be an improvement on his usual developing maneuver. 5.♕g4 b6 6.♘f3 ♗a6 7.♗xa6 ♘xa6 8.0-0, noted by Nimzowitsch, actually does favor White; however, if 5... c5!? 6.♘f3 cd 7.♕xd4 ♘c6 8.♕f4 ♘ge7 he still must fight for an advantage.

5. ... ♘b8-c6

Black cannot stir up any substantial counterplay without c7-c5. Nevertheless, his fortress is still rather durable.

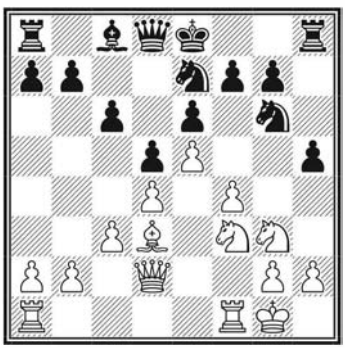
6. c2-c3 ♘g8-e7
7. ♗c1-g5 ♕d8-d7
8. ♘b1-d2 ♘e7-g6
9. 0-0 ...

It is easier to attack by playing 9.♕c2 ♗e7 10.h4 (Nimzowitsch). Marching the f-pawn is slightly less effective.

9. ... ♗f8-e7
10. f2-f4 ♕d7-d8
11. ♘d2-f3 h7-h6?!
12. ♗g5xe7 ...

12.♗xg6 hg 13.♕d3! ♖f8 (13... fxg6 14.♕xg6+ ♔d7 15.f5) 14.♗h5 ♖h8 (aimed against 15.♕h7) 15.♗xf7+!? (15.♗g4!?) 15...♔xf7 16.fg ♔g8 17.♘f4 ♗d7 18.h4 is more interesting, and Black will struggle to defend his cramped position.

12. ... ♘c6xe7
13. ♕d1-d2 c7-c6
14. ♘e2-g3 h6-h5



15. f4-f5!? ...

Nimzowitsch opts for an immediate sacrifice instead of breaking down Black's blockade on the white squares with 15.♘g5 ♘h4 16.♕e2 g6. He chose not to comment upon Albin's reply, but wrongfully. The endgame resulting after 15...♘xf5 16.♖ae1 (threatening 17.♘xf5 ef 18.e6) 16... ♘ge7 17.♕g5 ♘xg3 18.hg ♘f5

19.♗xf5 ♕xg5 20.Nxg5 ef 21.e6 ♗xe6 22.♖xf5 0-0 looks like drawn.

15. ... e6xf5?

16. ♘f3-g5 ...

Yet another sacrifice aimed at wrenching open some lines is on the agenda. Nevertheless, 16.♕g5 (16... ♕d7 17.Nxf5! Nxf5 18.e6!) looks simpler and stronger.

16. ... f5-f4

17. ♖f1xf4! ♘g6xf4

18. ♕d2xf4 ♗c8-e6

19. ♖a1-f1 ♕d8-b6?!

19...♕d7! is more precise than 19...♕c7?! and the text move, because in the 20.♘xf7 0-0 21.Nh6+ gh 22.♕xh6 line the bishop is protected, and White's attack is not a sure thing. If 20.♕f3, then 20...0-0-0 21.♘xf7 ♗xf7 22.♕xf7 g6, and Black may be able to fend off the attack.

20. ♘g3-f5?! ...

Nimzowitsch's self-proclaimed 'remarkable positional intuition' failed him here. Black could have held on in this seemingly dangerous position by playing 20...♗xf5 21.♗xf5 c5! 22.♗d3 0-0, while the prophylactic 20.b4! would have backed Black up against a wall!

20. ... ♘e7xf5?

21. ♗d3xf5 ♕b6-c7

22. ♗f5xe6 f7xe6

23. ♘g5xe6 ♕c7-e7

24. ♕f4-f5 ♔e8-d7

25. ♘e6-f8++ ♔d7-c7

26. ♘f8-g6 ♕e7-e8

27. ♘g6xh8 ♕e8xh8

28. ♕f5-e6 ...

White has an extra passed pawn and an overwhelming position, so all roads lead to Rome: 28.e6, 28.♕g6, followed by invading the 7th rank (♖f1-f7), and the text move are winning.

28. ... ♔c7-b6

29. ♕e6-e7 ♕h8-h6

30. ♕e7-c5+ ♔b6-a6

31. b2-b4 b7-b5

In the 31...b6 32.b5+! cb 33.♕a3+ ♔b7 34.♖f7+ ♔c6 35.h3 h4 36.♔h1 variation Nimzowitsch takes prophylactic measures, but there is no need to because he has 35.c4!

32. h2-h3 ...

Another pointless move. After 32.a4 White wins by wrenching open the a-file.

32. ... h5-h4

33. ♔g1-h1 ♕h6-e6

34. ♖f1-f7 ♕e6-h6

35. a2-a4 ♕h6-e6

36. a4-a5 ♕e6-e8

37. ♖f7xa7+ ♖a8xa7

38. ♕c5-b6#

Alexander Alekhine first employed the defense bearing his name in a game versus Donegan, Muellner, and Zimmerman (August 1921). He implemented 1...Nf6 during a serious tournament game two months later. His games against Friedrich Saemisch and Endre Steiner during the Budapest tournament were not particularly impressive though, but it would be a disservice to Alekhine's

legacy to forego commentating his fascinating draw against Eugene Znosko-Borovsky in 1925.

Game 2
E.Znosko-Borovsky – A.Alekhine
Paris 1925

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
5. f2-f4 ...



By the time this game was being played the dangerous Four Pawns Attack was by no means a novelty. Max Euwe and Georg Marco employed this system against Bora Kostic during the 1921 Hague tournament. Alekhine had not faced this tough pawn quartet yet.

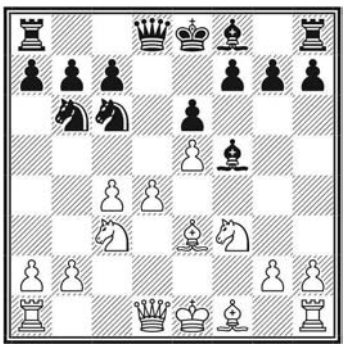
5. ... d6xe5
6. f4xe5 ♘b8-c6
7. ♗c1-e3 ♗c8-f5
8. ♘g1-f3 ...

A slight imprecision. White neglects the threat on c2. Generally, players develop their queen's knight first.

8. ... e7-e6

Black should have forced the b1-knight onto the brim by playing 8... ♘b4, going for 9.♘a3 e6 10.♗e2 ♗e7 11.0-0 0-0 12.♕d2 c5 13.♔h1 ♗g6 14.♘b5 (unlike 14.♖fd1, this helps bring the b6-knight back to life) 14...♘c2 15.♖ac1 cd 16.♗xd4 ♘xd4 17.♘bxd4 ♘a4 18.b3 ♘c5 19.b4?! ♘e4 20.♕e1 a5 21.a3 ab 22.ab ♖a2, and now Black is the one with an advantage, Ye Ling Feng – Benjamin, New York 2007. This pawn push returns the players to an opening tabiya.

9. ♘b1-c3 ...



9. ... ♘c6-b4

This is one major contribution to opening theory made by the fourth world chess champion. The knight clears the way for the c-pawn with tempo, which allows Black to undermine his opponent's center.

10. ♖a1-c1 c7-c5
11. a2-a3 ...

Znovsko-Borovsky forces his

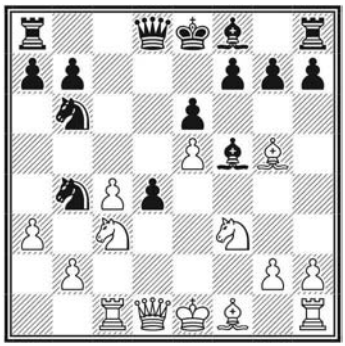
rival to commit to a plan in the center immediately. If White intends on pushing d4-d5 then it is best to do so after playing 11.♗g5 ♗e7 12.♗xe7 ♕xe7, not immediately. However, after 13.d5 ed 14.♘xd5 ♕d7 15.♘xb4 cb 16.c5 ♕xd1+ 17.♖xd1 ♘d7 both players have equal chances.

The players can enter into a non-aggression pact lasting two moves in order to finish mobilizing their respective kingsides – 11.♗e2 ♗e7 12.0-0 0-0. In the complex variation of 13.dc ♘d7 14.♘d5!? ♘xa2! 15.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 16.♖a1 ♘b4 it is crucial that an immediate ♕d1-d6 fails to a queen exchange followed by a knight fork. If 13.a3, then 13... cxd4 14.♘xd4 ♘c6 15.♘xf5 ef 16.♖xf5 g6 17.♖f2 ♘xe5 18.♕b3 ♘bd7 19.♖d1 ♕c8 is logical, because White needs to defend the c4-pawn, which depreciates his two bishops significantly.

11. ... c5xd4

12. ♗e3-g5? ...

Objectively speaking, this is a weak move, which Alekhine was unable to fully exploit. 12.ab, which objectively is not a bad capture, never seemed to catch on. After 12... de 13.c5 ♘d7 14.♗b5 a6 15.♗a4 a5 16.♖a1 ♖a6! White's pawn chain crumbles and his advantage evaporates. In the event of the typical 12.♘xd4 ♘c6 White is not inspired by any of the captures — a long fight awaits him and he does not have a clear advantage. Here are some exemplary continuations: 13.♘xc6 bc 14.♕f3 ♕c7 15.♗e2 ♖d8 16.0-0 ♗e7, or 13.♘xf5 ef 14.♕f3 g6 15.♘b5 ♘d7 16.♖d1 a6 17.♗g5 ♕b8 18.♘d6+ ♗xd6 19.ed 0-0 20.♗e2 ♖e8, and after ♖e8-e6, White's far-advanced pawn looks pretty frail.



12. ... d4xc3!

If Black does not want to merely fight for equality without queens (12...♕d7 13.♘xd4 ♘c6 14.♘db5 ♕xd1+ 15.♖xd1 ♖c8 16.♗e3) then he should just sacrifice his one!

13. ♗g5xd8 ♖a8xd8?!

Alekhine regretted that he missed an easy win here: 13...cxb2 14.♗xb6 bc♕ 15.♕xc1 ♘c2+ 16.♔f2 ab or 14.♗g5 bc♕ 15.♗xc1 ♘c2+ 16.♔f2 ♖d8 17.♕e2 ♗c5+ 18.♔g3 0-0. Black wins back material while continuing to fuel his raging initiative. But does he have a more complicated win?!

14. ♕d1-b3 c3xb2

15. ♕b3xb2 ♘b6-a4

16. ♕b2-a1 ♘b4-c2+

In any case, exchanging 16...

♘d3+ 17.♗xd3 ♖xd3 does not win. White wins back his queen and makes a transition to a tough, yet tenable endgame: 18.♘d4! ♖xa3 19.♘xf5 ♖xa1 20.♖xa1 ♗b4+ 21.♔d1 ef 22.♖xa4 a5 23.♔c2.

17. ♖c1xc2 ♗f5xc2
18. ♘f3-d4 ♗c2-g6
19. c4-c5!? ...

White should have opted for 19.♘b5 ♗c5 20.♘d6+ ♗xd6 21.ed 0-0 22.♕d4 instead of sacrificing a pawn and letting his bishop free. It is hard for Black to concentrate his troops and contend for a win while White's passed pawn lives.

19. ... ♘a4xc5
20. ♗f1-b5+ ♘c5-d7
21. ♕a1-c3 a7-a6?

Black has ruined any chance at winning by delaying to mobilize his forces. 21...♗e7 22.♕c7 a6 23.♗a4 b5 24.♘c6 ba 25.0-0 ♗c5+ 26.♔h1 ♖a8 27.♖c1 0-0 28.♕xd7 ♗xa3 was necessary, or 23...♗e4, recommended by Alekhine, if he was wary about White's knight invading to c6.

22. ♗b5xd7+ ♖d8xd7
23. ♕c3-c8+ ♖d7-d8
24. ♕c8xb7 ♖d8xd4
25. ♕b7-c6+ ♖d4-d7
26. 0-0 ♗g6-d3
27. ♖f1xf7 ...

These two valiant fighters are in no hurry to smoke the pipe of peace. Black passed up 26...♔e7 27.♕c5+ ♔d8 28.♕b6+ ♔e8 29.♕c6, whereas White refrained from 27.♕c8+ ♖d8 28.♕c6+.

27. ... ♗f8-c5+
28. ♔g1-h1 ♗d3-b5

Alekhine rightly decided against 28...♗e7 29.♕xe6 ♗g6(?) due to 30.♖f1!. White would subsequently shift the rook to c1 and then start moving all over the board. But the position has already slipped into drawn quicksand — 29...♗f5! 30.♖xe7+ ♖xe7 31.♕xf5 ♖f8 32.♕c8+ ♔f7 33.♕c4+ ♖e6 34.h3, and there is nothing interesting left.

29. ♕c6xe6+ ♖d7-e7

Black is forced to settle for a draw by repetition. If 29...♔d8? then 30.♖xd7+ ♗xd7 31.♕d5 ♖f8 32.g4, and Black drops a bishop.

30. ♖f7xe7+ ♗c5xe7
31. ♕e6-c8+ ♗e7-d8
32. ♕c8-e6+ ♗d8-e7
33. ♕e6-c8+ ♗e7-d8
34. ♕c8-e6+

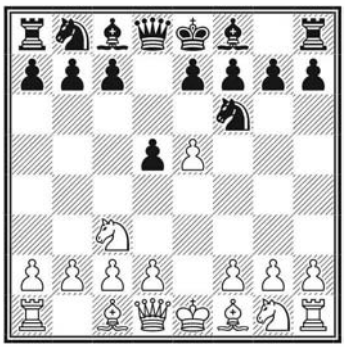
½ - ½

Alekhine's encounter with the venerable Jacques Mieses was of a completely different nature. Black gradually equalized, acquiring little tiny advantages, and winning without getting into any dicey positions. This game laid the groundwork for theory on the Alekhine Defense.

Game 3
J.Mieses – A.Alekhine
Baden-Baden 1925

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♘b1-c3 d7-d5

3. e4-e5 ...



3. ... ♘f6-d7

Alekhine outright rejected 3... ♘e4 because of 4.♘ce2!. The exclamation mark is justified, although Alekhine's evaluation of the position is misguided.

4. ♘c3xd5 ...

We wonder if Mieses came up with this himself or, more likely, copied Nimzowitsch, who played so seven rounds earlier in his game against Reti. This unusual exchange is hardly seen in other variations of the Alekhine Defense, so we shall take a brief look at this and then move on.

4. ... ♘d7xe5

5. ♘d5-e3 ...

If 5.♘c3 then White would be closing off the long diagonal intended for his dark-squared bishop.

5. ... ♘b8-c6

Now 5...c5, seeking to establish tighter control over d4, became more of a priority. 6.b3 ♘bc6 7.♗b2 ♘d4 8.c3 (8.♕h5 ♕d6 9.♗xd4 cd 10.♘c4 ♘xc4 11.♗xc4 e6 is no better) 8...♘f5 9.♕c2 g6 10.♕e4 ♗g7 11.♗b5+ ♔f8 12.♗e2 ♘xe3 13.♕xe3 ♕c7 14.h3 ♗f5 could follow, Lu Shanglei – Dimitrov, Golden Sands 2012. The black king has lost castling rights, but his cavalry is dominating.

Vladimir Sergeev (White), a well-known expert on the Alekhine Defense, gradually outplayed Sikora-Lerch (Liberec 2005) after 5...♘ec6!? 6.f4 e5!? 7.fe ♗c5! 8.♕e2 0-0 9.♘f3 ♘d4 10.♘xd4 ♗xd4 11.c3 ♗xe5 12.d4 ♕h4+?! 13.♕f2 ♕xf2+ 14.♔xf2 ♗d6 15.♘c4 ♗e7 16.♗f4 ♗d8 17.♗e2 ♘d7 18.♖he1, but that can be attributed rather to a faulty queen exchange than anything else. Black is doing excellently after 12...♗d6 13.g3 c5 14.d5 ♖e8 15.♗g2 ♘d7 16.0-0 ♘e5.

6. ♘g1-f3 ...

The exchange of pawns made by Nimzowitsch and Reti, 6.b3 e6 7.♗b2 ♗e7 8.f4 ♘g6 9.♗xg7 ♖g8 10.♗b2 ♘xf4, plays into White's hands. Now 11.♕f3 ♗f6!? 12. 0-0-0 ♗xb2+ 13.♔xb2 ♘d5 14.♘xd5 ♕xd5 15.♕xd5 ed 16.♖e1+ ♗e6 17.♘e2 and 18.♘f4 is of particular interest – Black finishes his queenside development by giving up some ground positionally. 7...♘g6, planning e6-e5, is better. If 8.d4 then Black can delay mobilizing his kingside and focus on the queenside — 8...♘ce7 9.c4 ♗d7, and then ♗d7-c6.

6. ... ♘e5xf3+
7. ♕d1xf3 ♕d8-d6

Black's setup failed to impress Mieses, so he repeated the same opening against Reti a few days later. That time he faced stiff resistance: 7...g6 8.♗b5 ♗d7 9.d4 ♗g7 10.d5?! (10.c3 keeps the position balanced) 10...♘d4 11.♗xd7+ ♕xd7 12.♕d1 0-0-0 13.0-0 ♔b8 14.c4 e6 15.♖b1 ♖he8, and Black has an excellent setup.

8. ♗f1-b5 ♗c8-d7
9. 0-0 e7-e6

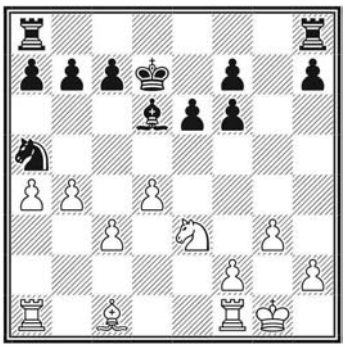
The 2.♘c3 d5 3.ed ♘xd5 line has proved over and over again that Black should not have a care in the world if he controls d4. This is true here, too – 9...f6 10.d3 e5 promises Black little to no trouble.

10. c2-c3 ♕d6-e5
11. a2-a4 ...

Alekhine advocates for 11.♕e2 ♗d6 12.f4, practically forcing Black to make rather dangerous long castling.

11. ... ♗f8-d6
12. g2-g3 ♕e5-f6!
13. ♕f3xf6 g7xf6
14. d2-d4 ♘c6-a5
15. ♗b5xd7+ ♔e8xd7
16. b2-b4 ...

What allows Black to believe he will soon have a better endgame? His activity on the kingside, play against White's advanced queenside pawns, and most importantly, optimism and superior technique. If 16...♘b3 17.♖b1 ♘xc1 18.♖fxc1 then White's pawn armada will move forward, so Black does not have much of a choice.



16. ... ♘a5-c6
17. ♖f1-d1 ...

17.b5 ♘a5 18.♖b1 ♖hg8 19.c4 b6 20.♗d2 ♘b7 21.♖fc1 is more precise, and by expanding on the queenside White limits his opponent's viable options.

17. ... a7-a6
18. ♖a1-b1 b7-b5
19. a4-a5?! ...

White should have dropped the rook back, opening up the long diagonal, just at an unwelcome moment for Black. Mieses is putting up very weak resistance.

19. ... ♘c6-e7
20. ♔g1-f1 ♔d7-c6
21. ♖b1-b2 ♘e7-d5
22. ♔f1-e1 h7-h5

Alekhine's sloppy comment — 22...♘xc3 23.♖c2 ♗xb4 24.♗d2 (causing Blacksome serious trouble) — needs to be tweaked. After 23... ♔b7 24.♖xc3 ♗xb4 25.♗d2 ♗xc3 26.♗xc3 f5 White is the one in hot water.

23. ♘e3-g2 ♖a8-e8
24. ♗c1-e3 f6-f5
25. ♔e1-d2? ...

If ♖d1-d3 and ♔e1-f1 then White should still be able to hold the position. Now everything falls to pieces.

25. ... h5-h4!
26. ♔d2-d3 h4xg3
27. h2xg3 ♖h8-h2
28. ♘g2-h4 ...

If 28.♖g1, then 28...♖g8 29.♖bb1 ♗xg3! 30.fg ♖xg3 (Alekhine). Now the bland 28...♘xe3 29.♔xe3 f4+ is the shortest path to victory.

28. ... ♗d6xg3
29. ♘h4-f3 ♖h2-g2
30. ♘f3-e1 ♖g2-g1!
31. ♖b2-e2 ♗g3-d6
32. ♖d1-c1 ♖e8-h8
33. ♘e1-f3? ♖g1xc1
39. ♗e3xc1 ♖h8-h3
0-1

A year later, the knight retreat (3...♘fd7) let Alekhine down. Aron Nimzowitsch made a novelty move and emerged victorious. Subsequently, the 4.f4 line became known as the Nimzowitsch variation.

Game 4
A.Nimzowitsch – A.Alekhine
Semmering 1926

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♘b1-c3 d7-d5
3. e4-e5 ♘f6-d7
4. f2-f4 ...



White protects his foot soldier on the front line, tucks his king away on the queenside, and advances the d-pawn one square, not two (which would switch to the French Defense).

4. ... e7-e6

If Black plays 4...c5 at first then there are many other offshoots that are harmless for Black. 4...♘b6!?, freeing the bishop from captivity, is terribly interesting. Konopka outplayed Walter (Augsburg 1999) in record time: 5.♘f3 ♗g4 6.d3 e6 7.♗d2 ♘c6 8.h3?? ♗xf3. Vladimir Bagirov met 5.d4 with 5... h5, eventually posting his queen's knight on f5.

5. ♘g1-f3 ...

In the tournament book Nimzowitsch suggests 5.♕g4 (his signature pounce) 5...♘c6 6.♘f3 ♘b4 7.♔d1 – losing castling rights should not matter because the position is closed. Kopylov, as Black against Denker (Bargteheide 2008), continued energetically with 5...f5

6.♕g3 d4 7.♘d1 ♘c5 8.d3 ♘c6 9.♗d2 b6 10.♗e2 ♗b7 11.♘f3 ♕d7 12.0-0 0-0-0 13.b3 ♗e7 14.♘b2 h6 15.b4 ♘e4! 16.de fe, winning back the piece and obtaining a favorable position.

5. ... c7-c5

6. g2-g3 ...

After 6.♗e2, the assumed d2-d3 would limit the scope of White's bishop, so Yates exchanged it off in his game against Rubinstein, Semmering 1926: 6.♗b5 a6 7.♗xd7+ ♗xd7 8.0-0 ♘c6 9.d3 g6 10.♕e1 ♕c7 11.♘d1 0-0-0 12.c3 ♗e7 13.♗e3 ♔b8 14.♕f2 d4! 15.cd ♘b4 16.♕d2 (16.♘c3 ♘xd3 17.♕e2 ♗c6!) 16...♗c6 17.a3 ♗xf3 18.ab cd 19.♖xf3 de 20.♘xe3 ♕b6. White is up a pawn, but he does not even have the slightest advantage in this ludicrous position.

6. ... ♘b8-c6

7. ♗f1-g2 ♗f8-e7

8. 0-0 0-0

9. d2-d3 ♘d7-b6

If the standard f7-f6, undermining White's pawn chain, is played, then the knight may come in handy on the kingside. For instance, 9...f6 10.ef ♘xf6 11.♖e1 ♗d6 12.♘g5 ♘d4 13.♗e3 h6 14.♘h3 ♗d7 15.♔h1 ♕c7 Prados – Colovic, Dos Hermanas 2006. Black has finished his development, taken control of the center, and is not too concerned about his backward pawn.

10. ♘c3-e2 d5-d4

Raymond Keene, who commented this game, claims Black missed the last good moment to play f7-f6. But it would be incorrect to say that Black has no weaknesses after 10...f6 11.ef ♗xf6 12.c3 e5. In the 13.fe ♘xe5 14.♘xe5 ♗xe5 15.♖xf8+ ♕xf8 16.a4 a5 17.♕b3 ♕d6 18.♗f4 variation White has enough targets to attack.

11. g3-g4 f7-f6

This is an unnecessary move, although it is not a mistake. If 11...♗d7 12.a3 (aimed against ♘c6-b4-d5) 12...♕c7 13.♗d2 ♖ad8 14.♘g3 ♘d5 then Black has nothing to complain about.

12. e5xf6 g7xf6?

12...♗xf6 13.♘g3 ♘d5 14.♕e2 ♕c7 would have been the right continuation. Alekhine has destroyed his king's abode, so all of his subsequent titanic attempts at mending his position are for naught.

13. ♘e2-g3 ♘b6-d5

14. ♕d1-e2 ♗e7-d6

15. ♘f3-h4 ♘c6-e7

16. ♗c1-d2 ...

16.♘h5 (16...♘g6? 17.♗xd5 ed 18.♘f5), recommended by Nimzowitsch, is no worse, to say the least.

16. ... ♕d8-c7

17. ♕e2-f2 c5-c4!?

18. d3xc4 ♘d5-e3!?

19. ♗d2xe3 d4xe3

20. ♕f2-f3 ♕c7xc4

21. ♘g3-e4 ♗d6-c7

22. b2-b3 ♕c4-d4

23. c2-c3 ♕d4-b6

24. ♔g1-h1 ♘e7-d5

Black is simply unable to finish his development and protect his king and e3-pawn all at the same time. If 24...f5 25.♘g3 e5! 26.fe f4 he has almost solved all of these problems, but 25.♘g5 is a noticeable improvement.

25. f4-f5? ...

Nimzowitsch pushed the wrong pawn, thereby giving up the initiative. After 25.g5! f5 26.♕h5! fe? 27.♗xe4 ♖f7 28.g6, White wins.

25. ... ♘d5-f4
26. ♖f1-d1 ♔g8-h8

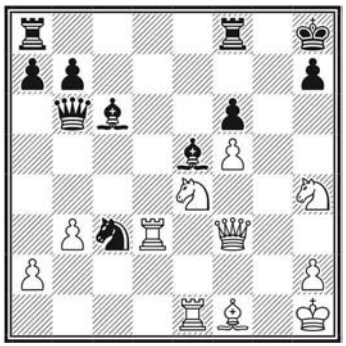
26...e2!? 27.♖d2 ef 28.gf ♖f7 is interesting, not allowing the white bishop to shift to a different, more favorable diagonal.

27. ♗g2-f1 e6xf5
28. g4xf5 ♗c7-e5
29. ♖d1-e1 ♗c8-d7
30. ♖e1xe3 ♗d7-c6
31. ♖a1-e1?! ...

White should have completed his bishop maneuver by shifting it to c4 to deprive Black's rook of the key g8-square. Meeting 31...♕c7 with 32.a4 would protect the bishop against b7-b5.

31. ... ♘f4-d5
32. ♖e3-d3 ♘d5xc3?

Alekhine had calculated a winning variation: 33.♖xc3 ♗xc3 34.♕xc3 ♕f2, although he failed to consider White's stunning refutation of his combination. 32... ♖g8, followed by doubling his rooks, would have done the job.



33. ♘h4-g6+! h7xg6
34. ♕f3-g4! ♖f8-f7?

This drastic change of events rattled Black. First, he let a win slip between his fingers and now he missed a drawing continuation. After 34...♖g8 35.fg ♔g7 36.♖d7+ ♗xd7 37.♕xd7+ ♔xg6 38.♗d3 ♔h6 39.♕h3+ ♔g7 40.♘xc3 ♖h8 41.♕d7+ ♔f8 42.♖xe5! fe 43.♕f5+, the game would have ended in perpetual check.

35. ♖d3-h3+ ♔h8-g7
36. ♗f1-c4! ♗c6-d5
37. f5xg6 ...

Black's king position is so atrocious that White can take his pick of winning lines. 37.♕xg6+ ♔f8 38.♗xd5 ♘xd5 39.♖h8+ ♔e7 40.♖xa8 is rather bland. Nimzowitsch opts for a more flashy attack on the desperately weak light squares.

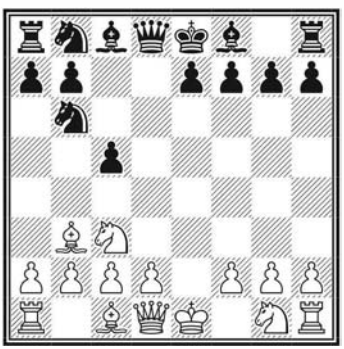
37. ... ♘c3xe4
38. g6xf7+ ♔g7-f8
39. ♖e1xe4 ♗d5xe4+
40. ♕g4xe4 ♔f8-e7
41. f7-f8♕+ ♖a8xf8

42. ♕e4-d5 ♕b6-d6
43. ♕d5xb7+ ♔e7-d8
44. ♖h3-d3 ♗e5-d4
45. ♕b7-e4 ♖f8-e8
46. ♖d3xd4
1-0

As one can see, the opening had nothing to do with Black's loss. Nevertheless, Alekhine lost interest in his brainchild after Semmering, playing 1...♘f6 only a few times thereafter. However, tons of amateurs, primarily players participating in simuls, started employing the Alekhine Defense against the inventor himself. This game, played during Alekhine's record-breaking 28-board blindfold simul, tops the list.

Game 5
A.Alekhine – P.Potemkin
Paris 1925, simul

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♘b1-c3 d7-d5
3. e4xd5 ♘f6xd5
4. ♗f1-c4 ♘d5-b6
5. ♗c4-b3 c7-c5



Alekhine commented this game in his book On the Road to the World Championship. But he disregarded the principled continuation 6.♕h5!? c4 7.♗xc4 ♘xc4 8.♕b5+, which is considered in our theoretical section.

One can only assume that the world champion intentionally did not analyze a continuation he was planning on employing later. But it just so happened that Alekhine only played 2.♘c3 in simuls, and he always pushed his e-pawn in games versus serious rivals such as Fine, Tartakower, Euwe and Reshevsky.

6. d2-d3 ♘b8-c6

6...♗f5, letting the bishop out of the pawn wall, is interesting. After 7.♕f3 ♕d7 8.♕g3 ♘c6 9.♘f3 e6 10.0-0 ♗d6!?, Houdini strongly advocates accepting the sacrifice, although not everyone would love to be White in the 11.♕xg7 0-0-0 12.♕h6 ♖hg8 13.♔h1 ♖g6 14.♕e3 variation. Black simply finishes his development and equalizes if White does not take the pawn: 11.♗f4 ♗xf4 12.♕xf4 0-0 13.♖fe1 ♖ad8 14.♘e4 ♗xe4 15.♕xe4 ♘d5 16.c3 ♘f6 17.♕e3 (Filipowicz – Chetverik, Switzerland 2012) 17... ♕xd3 18.♕xc5 ♘e4 19.♕h5 ♘f6.

7. ♘g1-f3 ...

Alekhine decided against blocking in the c8-bishop by attacking f7. After 7.♕h5 e6 8.♗g5 ♗e7 9.♘f3 0-0 10.0-0 a5 11.a3 h6 12.♗xe7 ♕xe7, or 7.♕f3 e6 8.♘ge2 ♗e7 9.♕g3 0-0 10.♗h6

♗f6 11.♘e4 ♗e5 (11...♘d5!?) 12.f4 ♗f6 13.0-0-0 ♔h8 14.♗g5 ♗e7 15.♗xe7 ♕xe7 16.♕f2 ♘d7 Babits – Z.Varga, Heviz 2011, Black has a solid position, but he still has some work to do on his queenside.

7. ... ♘c6-a5?!

Potemkin neglects development in order to get the bishop pair. It makes sense to exchange off the bishop after 7...e6 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♗f4 0-0 10.♖e1. If 7...♗f5 8.♗f4 e6 9.0-0 ♗e7 10.♕e2 0-0 then Black has already mobilized his forces and keeps the position balanced.

8. ♘f3-e5 ♘a5xb3
9. a2xb3 ♘b6-d7?!

Black is hoping to alleviate some of his problems by exchanging off a few pieces. 9...♗e6 10.♘e4 ♗d5 11.0-0 ♗xe4 12.de ♕xd1 13.♖xd1 f6 14.♘c4 ♘xc4 15.bc leads to simplifications but there is no clear-cut draw on the horizon.

10. ♘e5-c4! ...

How can Black evacuate his king now? 10...e5 would be met by 11.f4!, while 10...e6 would be met by 11.♗f4 a6 12.♘e4. If 10...g6 11.♗f4 ♗g7 12.♘b5 0-0 13.♗c7 ♕e8 14.♗g3 ♕d8 15.♘c7 ♖b8 16.♖xa7 then a pendulum-like bishop maneuver would ward off e7-e5.

10. ... ♘d7-b6
11. ♗c1-f4 ...

11.♕h5, followed by 11...♘xc4 12.dc e6 13.0-0 ♗e7 14.♖d1 ♗d7 15.♘e4 ♕c7 16.♗g5, is more energetic. Black is on the verge of a disaster.

11. ... ♘b6-d5
12. ♘c3xd5 ♕d8xd5
13. 0-0 ...

Threatening ♘c4-b6. After exchanging queens, that threat costs Black a pawn: 13.♕f3!? ♕xf3 14.gf.

13. ... b7-b5
14. ♘c4-e3 ♕d5-c6

14...♕d7 (15.♕h5 e6 16.♗e5 ♗b7), backing out of the d-pawn's way, is more persistent.

15. d3-d4 e7-e6
16. d4-d5 e6xd5?!
17. ♘e3xd5 ♗f8-d6
18. ♖f1-e1+ ♗c8-e6
19. ♗f4xd6 ...

Alekhine rightly noted that 19.♕f3! ♖c8 20.♖xa7 is more precise, but how is the text any simpler, especially in a blindfold game?! Later on, Potemkin could keep resisting for a while instead of capitulating.

19. ... ♕c6xd6
20. ♖a1-a6! ♕d6-d8
21. ♖e1xe6+ f7xe6
22. ♖a6xe6+ ♔e8-f7
23. ♖e6-e7+ ♕d8xe7
24. ♘d5xe7 ♔f7xe7
25. ♕d1-e2+ ♔e7-f7
26. ♕e2-h5+ ♔f7-f6
27. ♕h5xc5 ♖h8-d8
28. g2-g4

1-0

Naturally, theory on the main continuation, 2.e5, was growing exponentially relative to theory on 2.♘c3. In 1922 Hans Fahrni, a Swiss master, published valuable analysis on the most current systems. In

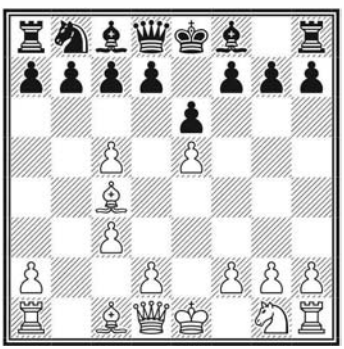
1923 Gruber – Tartakower, which looked pretty run-of-the-mill, gave the chess world a new system, the Two Pawns Attack. This ambitious line, in which White aims to grab the initiative quickly due to his huge space advantage, wound up being a fierce weapon in the hands of tactical geniuses. This next game was also played in a simul, albeit not a blindfold one. One should not take Lasker's opponent lightly. Buchholz, a total unknown on the chess circuit, went blow for blow with the ex-world champion until he cracked.

Game 6

Em. Lasker – Buchholtz

Copenhagen 1927, simul

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
4.	**c4-c5**	**♘b6-d5**
5.	**♗f1-c4**	**e7-e6**
6.	**♘b1-c3**	**♘d5xc3**
7.	**b2xc3**	**...**



Played significantly less often than the traditional capture away from the center. Actually, if White is looking for a blistering attack he should clear the way for his queen's bishop.

7. ... ♗f8xc5

7...d5 (7...d6) 8.cd cd 9.ed ♗xd6 is more solid, and Black can activate his pieces easily. After 10.♘f3 0-0 11.0-0 ♘d7 12.d4 b6 13.♕e2 ♗b7 14.♗d3?! (White should offer an exchange of bishops) 14...♕c7 15.c4 the players have a position reached on move 14 in Rabiega – Rublevsky, Frankfurt 2000 (started as the Sicilian Defense). Rublevsky could have pocketed a pawn, and he probably would have gotten off scot-free (15...♗xf3 16.♕xf3 ♗xh2+ 17.♔h1 ♗d6).

8. ♕d1-g4 ...

For some reason 8...d5! is not considered the main reply to 8.d4?!. If 9.ed ♗xd6 10.♘f3 0-0 11.0-0 ♘d7 Black has a pleasant position, as noted in the previous comment, and an extra pawn on c7.

8. ... ♔g8-f8

If 8...0-0!? 9.d4 f5! 10.ef ♕xf6 11.♘f3 d5! 12.♗d3 ♗d6 Taylor rightly prefers Black. The other ways of defending g7 have their flaws, too, although if 8...♗f8 the computer does not give White any extra points for being ahead in development.

9.	**d2-d4**	**♗c5-e7**
10.	**h2-h4**	**h7-h5**
11.	**♕g4-f4**	**f7-f5**

11...d5 12.ed ♗xd6, like before, puts up stiff resistance, and Black can fight for an advantage.

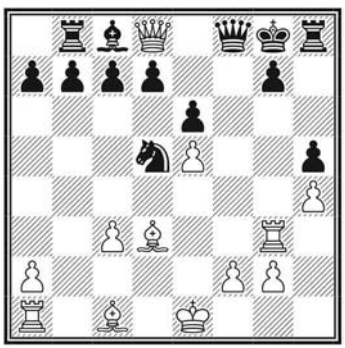
12. e5xf6 ♗e7xf6
13. ♘g1-f3 ♘b8-c6
14. ♘f3-e5 ♘c6-e7
15. ♗c4-d3 ♕d8-e8
16. ♕f4-f3 ♔f8-g8
17. ♖h1-h3?! ...

Lasker would not attack so bluntly in a serious tournament game. Perhaps, the players failed to notice that after 17...d6 18.♕e2 now 18...c5! is very strong.

17. ... ♗f6xe5?!
18. d4xe5 ♖a8-b8
19. ♖h3-g3 ♕e8-f7
20. ♕f3-f6 ♘e7-d5??

A heart-breaking and devastating blunder. Black probably could have simplified the position and drawn with 20...b6 21.♗h6 ♘f5 22.♗xf5 ♕xf6 23.ef ♖xh6 24.♖xg7+ ♔h8 25.♗d3 ♖xf6 26.♖h7+ ♔g8 27.♖xh5 ♗b7.

21. ♕f6-d8+ ♕f7-f8



22. ♖g3xg7+! ...

Forces mate.

22. ... ♔g8xg7
23. ♕d8-g5+ ♔g7-f7
24. ♕g5-g6+ ♔f7-e7
25. ♗c1-g5+ ♘d5-f6
26. ♗g5xf6+ ♕f8xf6
27. ♕g6xf6+ ♔e7-e8
28. ♗d3-g6#

Positional systems gradually started to take over in the Alekhine Defense, in theory and practice. Those who were content with little opted for the exchange variation. After 1.e4 ♘f6 2.e5 ♘d5 3.d4 d6 4.c4 ♘b6 5.ed most players would choose a symmetrical reply 5... exd6. The heyday for 5...cxd6 came much later. This next game directs us to positions arising after 5...cxd6; however, this classical masterpiece remains relevant to this day.

Game 7
F.Bohatirchuk – I.Rabinovich
Moscow 1924

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
4. d2-d4 d7-d6
5. e5xd6 c7xd6
6. ♗c1-e3 g7-g6
7. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-g7
8. ♘g1-f3 0-0
9. h2-h3 ♘b8-c6

One of the most topical tabiyas of the exchange variation. Generally, players opt for 10.♖c1 or 10.♗e2,

but setting up a battery along the c1-h6 diagonal should come as no surprise.



10. ♕d1-d2 d6-d5

Black does not wait for White to develop the f1-bishop, trying to win a tempo, because he has to do something about d4-d5 first. For instance, 10...♗f5 11.d5 ♘b4 12.♖c1 ♖c8 13.a3 ♘xc4 14.♗xc4 ♘c2+ 15.♖xc2 ♗xc2 16.♗e2 ♗f5 17.♗d4, and clearly the two minor pieces are stronger than the rook and pawn.

Black could have considered 10... e5. After 11.d5 ♘e7 12.g4!? ♗d7 13.♘e4 ♘bc8 14.♖g1 b5 15.c5 f5 16.gf ♗xf5 17.♘fg5 h6?! (17... ♗xe4 18.♘xe4 ♘f5) 18.♘e6 ♗xe6 19.de d5 20.0-0-0 ♕c7 21.♔b1! de? 22.♕d7 White's minimal advantage soon became overwhelming, Najer – Neverov, Dresden 2007. By sacrificing material (11...♘d4!?) Black gets the initiative for the pawn: 12.♘xd4 ed 13.♗xd4 ♖e8+ 14.♗e3 ♕h4 15.b3 ♖xe3+! 16.♕xe3 ♗d7 17.♕d2 ♖e8+ 18.♗e2 ♗d4.

11. c4-c5 ...

Let us check an exchange of dark-squared bishops in another setup: 11.cd ♘xd5 12.♗h6 ♘xc3 13.bc e6 14.h4 ♗xh6 15.♕xh6 f6 16.♗c4 ♗d7 17.♖b1 ♘a5 18.♗d3 ♖f7 19.0-0 ♖c8 Gaehwiler – Konopka, Rogaska Slatina 2009. Black has sufficient counter chances on the queenside. But if 17.♕e3 ♕e7 18.h5 g5 19.♘d2 then he still has not equalized yet.

11. ... ♘b6-c4
12. ♗f1xc4 d5xc4
13. 0-0 ...

13.d5 would be premature because the pawn could easily become a sitting duck. After 13...♘b4 14.0-0 ♗f5 15.♗d4 ♗d3 16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.♖fd1 ♘xd5 18.♘e1 ♘f6 19.♘xd3 cd 20.♕xd3 (Seirawan – Wirth, Zuerich 1988 simul) 20... ♕xd3 21.♖xd3 ♖fc8 Black posts up a knight on d5 and has absolutely nothing to worry about.

13. ... ♗c8-f5
14. ♖f1-d1 ♘c6-b4
15. ♗e3-h6 b7-b6
16. ♗h6xg7 ♔g8xg7
17. a2-a3 ...

It makes sense to loosen the knight that will eventually land on d3: 17.♘b5!? ♘d3 18.b3 cb 19.ab3±.

17. ... ♘b4-d3

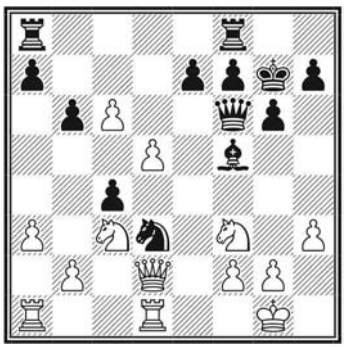
According to the winner's comments, this knight invasion was Black's decisive mistake, and 17...♘d5 was the strongest move. However, just the opposite is true –

17...♘d5 can be refuted by 18.♘e5, whereas the text move promises almost equality.

18. c5-c6 ♕d8-d6?!

Black should have waged war against White's pawn pair, instead of idly contemplating it: 18...♖c8 19.d5 e6!, and 20.g4 ♗xg4 21.hg ed wins a piece, although it does not guarantee White any real advantage.

19. d4-d5 ♕d6-f6



20. ♕d2-e3! ...

Bohatirchuk has a fine understanding of the position. He improves two of his pieces by shedding a pawn. Centralization of the rook is especially dangerous for Black, so he should have gone for 20...♖ad8 or 20...♖fe8.

20. ... ♘d3xb2?
21. ♖d1-d4 b6-b5
22. g2-g4 ♗f5-d3
23. ♘c3xb5 g6-g5

23...♘a4 would have parried the threat of ♖d4-f4 without dropping a pawn. However, White is playing in the center, wasting no time on flank attacks.

24. ♘f3-e5 ♖f8-d8
25. f2-f4 h7-h6
26. ♘e5-d7 ♖d8xd7
27. c6xd7 ♖a8-d8
28. f4xg5 h6xg5
29. d5-d6! ♖d8xd7
30. ♘b5-c7 ♔g7-f8
31. ♖a1-e1! ...

White is executing an elegant attack! If 31...♖xd6 then 32.♘d5, while if 31...exd6 then 32.♕e8+ ♔g7 33.♘e6+! decides.

31. ... e7-e6
32. h3-h4 g5xh4
33. ♖d4-f4 ♕f6-g6
34. ♕e3-e5 ♕g6-h6
35. g4-g5

1-0

This game won the second brilliancy prize.

An exchange on d6 serves as an entrance to two completely different main lines — c7xd6 and e7xd6, but the resulting pawn formation does not exactly give Black a ton of options. 1.e4 ♘f6 2.e5 ♘d5 3.d4 d6 4.♘f3, which provided chess theorists and players with endless possibilities and sidelines, is a whole another story...

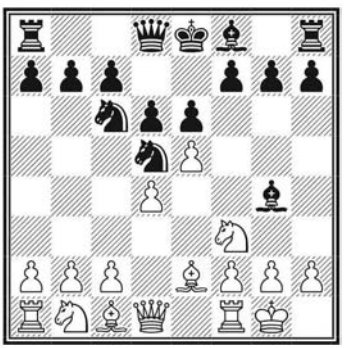
Game 8
F.Yates – E.Colle
Scarborough 1930

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6

Edgar Colle, a Belgian chess champion in the early-mid 1900's,

achieved astounding results with the Alekhine Defense. His first two attempts (against Mieses and Rosselli del Turco) went awry, but then he got on a roll. According to the Megabase, he won two times more games than he lost, defeating chess giants like Yates (three times), Spielmann (two times), Mieses, and Stoltz.

2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 ♗c8-g4
5. ♗f1-e2 e7-e6
6. 0-0 ♘b8-c6



The vast majority of players opt for 6...♗e7, instead of developing the knight, because the latter provokes Black to play c2-c4, followed by the keynote d4-d5!

7. c2-c4 ...

An exchange on d6 would give the retreating knight two extra squares. If 7.ed ♗xd6 8.c4 then Black should go for 8...♘f6 9.♗e3 0-0 10.♘c3 ♗b4, exerting strong control over the center, instead of 8...♘f4 9.♗xf4 ♗xf4 10.d5.

7. ... ♘d5-b6

Reti, not Mikenas (as Bagirov claimed), was a pioneer in the 7...♘de7 line. After 8.ed ♕xd6 9.♘c3 ♗xf3 10.♗xf3 0-0-0 (10... ♕xd4 11.♘b5! ♕xd1 12.♖xd1 ♖c8 13.♗f4) 11.d5 ♘e5 12.de ♘xf3+ 13.♕xf3 ♕xe6 14.b3 ♕f5 15.♕xf5 ♘xf5 16.♗f4 ♗c5 17.♖ad1 f6 18.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 Sergeant – Reti, Hastings 1926, the endgame drifted towards a draw, but White should have shied away from lightening up the center of the board (12. ♖e1!? ♘xc4 13.de). It would have been even better to make a key breakthrough by playing 11.♘b5! ♕d7 12.d5.

8. e5xd6 c7xd6
9. d4-d5 ...

Sometimes they include 9.♘c3 ♗e7 before making this break in the center. 9...d5 has bad statistics, which is easy to explain: Black cannot limit White's expansion by exerting pressure on d4. After 10.c5 ♘d7 11.b4 ♗xf3 12.♗xf3 a6 13.♖b1 ♘f6 14.a4 b6 15.♗e3 a5 16.♗e2 ab 17.♗b5 ♕d7? 18.♘a2! Bogoljubow knocked out Schulz (Lueneburg 1947). 17...♖c8 is more persistent though, and eventually the knight on d7 will free up his partner on c6.

According to Tartakower, 9.b3 had been played at a top amateur tournament (Ostrava 1923) by Bauer and Razovsky. The consequences of choosing 9...♗e7 are analyzed in Chapter 83.

9. ... e6xd5

10. c4xd5 ♗g4xf3
11. ♗e2xf3 ...

11.gf!?, looking to disturb Black's centralized knight with the doubled pawns, is interesting. Then White can use his light-squared bishop on its 'native' diagonal. After 11... ♘e5 12.♗b5+ ♘bd7 13.♖e1 ♗e7 14.f4 ♘g6 15.f5 ♘ge5 16.♘c3 a6 17.♗xd7+ ♕xd7 18.f4 ♘c4 19.♕d4 Black now has to capture on f5, part with his knight, and hope for some miniscule chances by his opponent's king. In Oll – Kaunas (Clichy 1991) 17...♘xd7 18.♗g5 f6 19.♕h5+ ♔f8 20.♗d2 ♕e8 21.♕h3 ♕f7 22.♖e3 ♔g8 23.♘e2 ♘e5 24.♘f4 g5 25.♖g3 h5 26.♗c3 h4 27.♖g2 ♔h7? 28.♘e6 ♕h5 29.f4 g4 30.fe! followed, and Black paid a hefty price for consolidating his position.

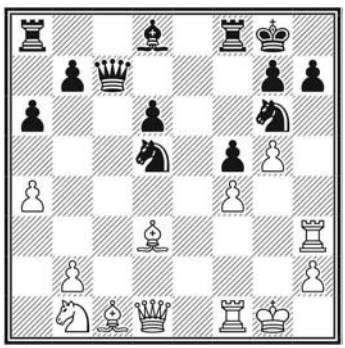
11. ... ♘c6-e5
12. ♗f3-e2 ...

Yates intends to redirect his queen's rook to the kingside as quickly as possible. 12.♗e4 ♗e7 13.♘c3 0-0 14.a4 ♖e8 15.a5 ♘bd7 16.♗e3, a more academic approach, does not have much bite.

12. ... ♗f8-e7
13. a2-a4 0-0
14. ♖a1-a3 ...

Here is a bit from one of the rising stars on the modern-day chess circuit: 14.a5 ♘bd7 15.♘c3 a6 16.♗e3 ♖c8 17.♕b3 ♕c7 18.♖fc1 ♕b8 19.f4 ♘g6 20.g3 Caruana – Galindo, Spain 2009. Expansion had not brought Caruana any real dividends yet, but his subsequent play was much more effective than Yates'.

14. ... f7-f5
15. f2-f4 ♘e5-g6
16. ♖a3-h3 ♗e7-f6
17. g2-g4 ♕d8-c7
18. g4-g5 ♗f6-d8
19. ♗e2-b5 a7-a6
20. ♗b5-d3 ♘b6xd5



It was hard for Yates to decide whether or not White should induce a7-a6, but the Englishman guessed right about the bishop coming to d3. It was a guess and that is all. The white bishop should have continued on via c2 to b3, thereby gaining the initiative for the lost pawn.

21. ♕d1-h5? ♕c7-c5+
22. ♔g1-h1 ♕c5-c6

Colle is not backing down, and it is time for White to retreat (23. ♕f3). Colle refutes the ensuing bishop sacrifice easily.

23. ♗d3-e4? f5xe4
24. f4-f5 h7-h6!
25. ♕h5xg6 e4-e3
26. ♕g6-e6+ ♖f8-f7

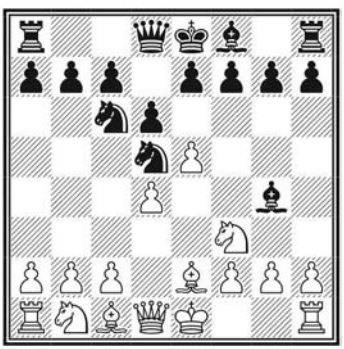
27. ♔h1-g1 ♗d8xg5
28. ♗c1xe3 ♘d5xe3
29. ♖h3xe3 ♕c6-c5
0-1

Game 9
A.Becker – S.Tartakower
Zandvoort 1936

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6

Saviely Tartakower can take pride in his incredible record with the Alekhine Defense, too. He either won or drew all of his games, except for his disastrous encounter against Theodore Tylor (Nottingham 1936). But he was routed because he opted for 2...e5, instead of his signature 2.♘d5, in response to 2.♘c3.

2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 ♗c8-g4
5. ♗f1-e2 ♘b8-c6



Vladas Mikenas, a renowned theorist on the Alekhine Defense, made a fundamental contribution to this line, the so-called Lithuanian variation. With that being said, this and the next move had been played before.

6. 0-0 d6xe5

Black commits to a particular pawn structure. Minekas had tried d6xe5 before, but he is most well-known for his 6...♘b6 continuation.

7. ♘f3xe5 ...

Capturing with the pawn does not pose any problems for Black whatsoever. For instance, there is 7.de e6 8.c4 ♘b6 9.♘bd2 ♗e7 10.h3 ♗h5 11.b3 0-0 12.♗b2 ♘d7, and the knight is heading for c5, a prime square, Dragun – Givon, Prague 2012.

7. ... ♘c6xe5

The 7...♗xe2 8.♕xe2 ♘xd4 line, winning a pawn, has been partially rehabilitated in the 21st century. It is risky to meet 9.♕c4 with 9...c5?!, due to 10.♖d1!?, intending to sacrifice the exchange (10...e6?! 11.♖xd4! cd 12.♕b5+). Black should return his spoils: 9...f6! 10.♕xd4 fe 11.♕xe5 ♕d6 12.♕e2 0-0-0 13.c4 ♘b4 14.♘c3 ♕g6 15.♗e3 ♘c6 16.♖ad1 ♖xd1 17.♖xd1 e6 18.♘b5 a6 19.♘d4 ♘xd4 20.♗xd4 ♗e7, finishing development without bearing any material losses, Stevic – Narciso Dublan, Rijeka 2010, or 14...♕d3!? 15.♕g4+ ♕d7 16.♕g5 h6 17.♕g6 ♕c6. Black can always threaten his opponent with a queen exchange.

8. d4xe5 ♗g4-f5
9. ♗e2-d3 ...

Alekseev – Kupreichik, Yekate-

rinburg 2002, was over very quickly: 9.c4 ♘b6 10.♕b3 e6 11.♖d1 ♕e7? 12.♘c3 g5 13.♗f3 c6 14.♘b5! ♗h6 15.♘d6+ ♔f8 16.♗e3 ♕c7 17.♘xf5 ef 18.♗c5+ ♔g7 19.♗d6 ♕c8 20.c5 ♘d7 21.♗h5 ♕e8 22.♗xf7! ♕xf7 23.e6 ♕f6 24.ed. It is pretty obvious why Black was routed — his queen was blocking in his bishop, so his position collapsed like a line of dominoes. 11...♕c8 followed by ♘b6-d7 would have given him chances at equalizing.

One key warning for all Alekhine Defense players: do not keep your knight on the hideous b6-square for too long! Start shifting it once the opportunity arises!

9. ... ♗f5-g6?!

Always keep your eye on e5-e6 in the Alekhine Defense! After 9... ♗xd3 10.♕xd3 ♕d7 11.♖d1 e6 12.c4 ♘b6 13.♕e2 ♕c6 14.b3 ♘d7 (a tried and true maneuver) White's advantage is marginal.

10. ♗d3xg6 h7xg6
11. e5-e6 ♕d8-d6

The move order 10.e6! ♕d6 11.♗xg6 hg is more precise, because in the game Tartakower could get a more closed and durable position playing 11...f5.

12. e6xf7+ ♔e8xf7
13. ♕d1-f3+ ♔f7-g8
14. h2-h3 c7-c6
15. c2-c4 ♘d5-f6
16. ♕f3-b3 e7-e6
17. ♗c1-e3?! ...

Black failed to take advantage of Becker's minor slip-up: 17...♘g4! 18.f4 ♘xe3 19.♕xe3 ♕c5 20.♕xc5 ♗xc5+ 21.♔h2 ♗d6=. 17.♖d1 ♕c7 18.♗e3 was the right move sequence.

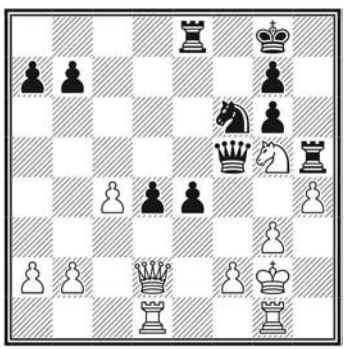
17. ... ♕d6-c7?!
18. ♘b1-d2 c6-c5
19. ♘d2-f3 e6-e5
20. ♖a1-d1 ♖a8-e8
21. ♖f1-e1 e5-e4
22. ♘f3-g5 ♖h8-h5
23. ♕b3-c2 ♗f8-d6
24. ♕c2-d2 ...

The Austrian chess player gets off track. His knight and queen had been zeroing in on his opponent's pawn. Why did not he have the rook join in after 24.♗c1!? ?

24. ... ♗d6-e5
25. g2-g3 ♕c7-c8
26. ♔g1-g2 ♕c8-f5
27. ♖e1-g1? ...

Now Tartakower creates a threatening pawn pair using hanging White's knight. 27.h4 ♕g4 28.♖h1 was necessary – White still would have had a more promising position.

27. ... ♗e5-d4
28. ♗e3xd4 c5xd4
29. h3-h4 ...



29. ... e4-e3!

Black cuts the queen off from her knight. He was counting on two possible rook endgames when making this move. The route to the first one is well-concealed: 30.♕e2! d3! 31.♕f3! ♕xf3+ 32.♘xf3 ef 33.♖gf1 ♖e3 34.♘g5 ♖xg5 35.hg ♘e4 36.♖xf2 ♘xf2 37.♔xf2 ♖e2+ 38.♔f3 ♖xb2 39.♖xd3, and a draw is likely.

30. f2xe3 ♖h5xg5!
31. h4xg5 ♕f5-e4+
32. ♔g2-h2 ♘f6-g4+?!

However, after 32...de 33.♕d4 ♘g4+ 34.♔h3 ♘f2+ 35.♔h2 ♘xd1 36.♕xe4 ♖xe4 37.♖xd1 ♖xc4 Black should have an advantage large enough for the win.

33. ♔h2-h3 ♔g8-f7
34. ♖g1-f1+? ...

The wrong rook! 34.♖df1+! ♘f6 35.g4! (White throws a pawn to the lions to get his king off the fateful back rank) 35...♖h8+ 36.♔g3 ♕xg4+ 37.♔f2, drawing, is the best continuation. 37...dxe3+ 38.♕xe3 ♕h4+ 39.♕g3 ♕d4+ 40.♔g2 ♖h4 may follow.

34. ... ♘g4-f6
35. ♖f1-f4 ♖e8-h8+
36. ♖f4-h4 ♖h8xh4+
37. g3xh4 ♕e4-f3+
38. ♔h3-h2 d4xe3
0-1

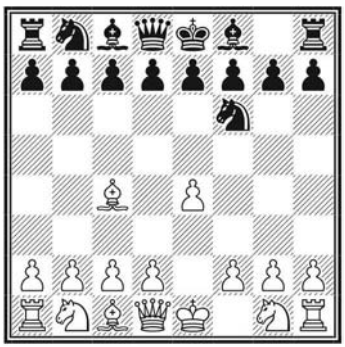
Richard Reti and Ernst Gruenfeld enjoyed playing the Alekhine Defense. Distinguished chess players such as Max Euwe and Salo Flohr would occasionally opt for this unusual opening. Later on, Smyslov, Korchnoi and Larsen would mix it up and play 1...♘f6; the latter elected this opening more often than the other two.

Nevertheless, no high-profile masters played the opening religiously, so it never quite caught on. Robert Fischer, one of the most prolific chess players of all time, went for the Alekhine Defense during his world championship match against Spassky. The American won game 13 and drew game 19. Magnus Carlsen, the rock star of the modern chess circuit, played 1...♘f6 at the 2007 World Blitz Championship (Moscow) and a few other tournaments. The Alekhine Defense has yet to become a fixture at elite tournaments, but it is still a part of many GMs' opening repertoire. All in all, it would not be fair to classify the Alekhine Defense as a second-rate opening.

Part 1. Various 2nd moves

Chapter 1. 2.♗c4

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♗f1-c4 ...



This looks like a pawn sacrifice, but it really is not. Picking up the c4-pawn causes Black to drop his f7-pawn and lose castling rights.

2. ... ♘f6xe4

Generally, Black accepts the challenge, counting on his potent pawn center. Let us limit the number of possible replies by discarding 2...♘c6 (see openings with 1...♘c6), 2...e5 (leading to the Bishop's Opening), 2...d6 (which is some offshoot of the Pirc Defense), 2...d5 (venturing into Scandinavian Defense territory), and 2...e6 (this will be considered later, via the 2.e5 ♘d5 3.♗c4 e6 move order). Black can go in for a flank attack, 2...b5!?, hoping to distract his opponent and lure the bishop off of the a2-g8 diagonal. Black should be content with the 3.♗b3 ♗b7 4.d3 e6 5.a4 b4 6.♘f3 ♗e7 variation, but the main line looks more promising.

3. ♗c4xf7+ ♔e8xf7
4. ♕d1-h5+ ♔f7-g8

One should make note of Zoltan Varga's treatment of the Alekhine Defense because he is considered one of the leading experts on the opening. Fragments of his games are littered throughout this book. He has played 4...g6 5.♕d5+ e6 6.♕xe4 d5 7.♕f4+ ♔g8 8.♘f3 ♗d6 9.♕h6 ♕f8 10.d4 ♘c6 11.c3 ♗d7 12.♕xf8+ ♖xf8 13.b4 h6 14.0-0 g5 15.♖e1 ♖f5 16.♘bd2 ♔h7 with a roughly equal position, Xheladini – Z.Varga, Basel 2007. However, if White were to keep queens on the board by playing 12.♕d2 he could fight for an advantage. 6...♗g7 7.♘f3 ♖f8 8.d4 ♔g8 9.♗g5 ♕e8 10.0-0 c5 is better, and Black has

castled by hand and drummed up some counterplay, although he has not developed his queenside yet.

5. ♕h5-d5+ e7-e6
6. ♕d5xe4 d7-d5
7. ♕e4-e2 ...

The queen steps back so as not to allow Black to play e6-e5, which would open up his queen's bishop. If 7.♕f3 e5 8.d3 ♘c6 9.c3 ♗e6, followed by ♕d8-f6, then it is smooth sailing for Black.

7. ... c7-c5

At the very least, this is no worse than 7...♘c6, insisting on e6-e5. It turns out that 8.♘f3 e5! 9.♘xe5?? ♘d4 Vospernik – Sklyarov, Pattaya 2011, shooting for 10.♕d3 ♕g5! 11.♕xd4 ♕xg2 12.♖f1 ♗h3 13.♕d3 ♗d6, is disastrous. In the 9.d3 ♗g4 10.c3 ♕f6 11.♘bd2 h6 12.h3 ♗xf3 13.♘xf3 ♔h7 variation Black sets up his forces rather harmoniously.

8. ♘g1-f3 ♘b8-c6
9. 0-0 ♗f8-d6
10. d2-d3 ♗c8-d7

Diagram



Black does not encounter any serious difficulties, no matter what strategy White may pursue. After 11.♗g5 ♕c7 12.c3 e5 13.♘a3 a6 14.♘c2 ♖e8 15.♘e3 ♗e6 16.h3 h6 17.♗h4 ♕f7 18.♗g3 ♔h7 White has bunkered down and does not have much going for him, except for his rock-solid fortress, S.Olah – Chetverik, Gyula 1997. Undermining the center with 11.c4 h6 12.♘c3 runs into 12... ♕f8!, planning ♕f8-f5. 13.cd ed 18.♘xd5?! ♗g4 would backfire on White.

2.♗c4 may not deserve a '?!'; however, it essentially turns White into Black. Strong chess players have never opted for such passive opening systems and never will.

Chapter 2. 2.d3

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. d2-d3 ...

Chess players who are not enamored with opening theory and have no qualms about playing modest and standard opening systems choose moves like 2.d3. Now Black has numerous attractive

follow-ups because he kicked off the game with a universally useful move – ♘g8-f6. However, we shall not analyze every possible continuation since that would lead us into other openings.



2. ... e7-e5

2...c5 and 2...d6 overlap with the Sicilian and Pirc defenses, respectively. Game 10, with a modified move order, illustrates the main idea behind 2...d5.

3. f2-f4 ...

It is hard to arrive at this position from any other opening, although Walbrodt and Alapin (Berlin 1897) managed to do so: 1.e4 e5 2.f4 ♘f6 3.d3 (a rare reply to a rare move) 3...d5!? 4.fe ♘g4 5.ed ♕xd5 6.♘f3 ♘c6? (calm, simple development) 7.d4 ♗f5 8.♗d3 g6 9.♗xf5 gf 10.♘c3 ♕a5 11.h3 ♘h6 12.♗g5 ♘g8, and one can only marvel at the fact that the Russian maestro lasted until move 44. Galdunts' treatment of the position, in his game against Vorotnikov (Wuerzburg 1992), should serve as a model for other players: 5...♘xe5 6.♘c3 ♗b4 7.♘f3 ♗g4 8.♗e2 ♕xd5 9.0-0 ♗xc3 10.bc ♗xf3 11.♗xf3 ♘xf3+ 12.♕xf3 ♕xf3 13.♖xf3 0-0 14.♗f4 ♘d7 15.♖e1 ♖fe8 16.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 17.♗xc7 ♖c8 18.♗d6 ♖xc3, and the players agreed to a truce in a few moves.

3. ... ♘b8-c6

Barrionuevo, as Black against Rodriguez Vila (Sao Paulo 2004), launched an attack on his opponent's king right out of the starting blocks: 3...♗c5(?) 4.fe ♘xe4 5.de ♕h4+ 6.♔d2 ♗xg1 7.♖xg1 ♕f2+ 8.♗e2 ♕d4+ 9.♗d3 ♕f2+ 10.♔c3 ♕c5+ 11.♗c4 b5 12.♕d5 ♕xc4+ 13.♕xc4 bc. 5.♕g4! refutes Black's premature attempt: after 5...d5 6.♕xg7 ♕h4+ 7.g3 ♗f2+ 8.♔d1 ♕g4+ 9.♕xg4 ♗xg4+ 10.♗e2 ♗xg1 11.♖xg1 ♗xe2+ 12.♔xe2 Black is down a pawn and has a worse position.

4. ♘g1-f3 ...

Nimzowitsch – Alekhine (New York 1927) is the most famous game in this line: 4.fe ♘xe5 5.♘f3 ♘xf3+ 6.♕xf3 d5 7.e5 ♕e7 8.d4 ♘e4 9.♗d3 ♕h4+ (Alekhine suggested 9...f5 10.0-0 ♗e6, and then 0-0-0) 10.g3 ♕g4 11.♘d2 ♕xf3 12.♘xf3 ♗e7 13.♗e3 ♗h3 14.♗xe4 de 15.♘d2 0-0-0 16.0-0-0 f6 17.ef ♗xf6 18.c3 ♖he8 with a balanced position.

A.Rotstein – Chetverik (Bad Ems 2014) saw 4.♘c3 ♗b4 5.♘f3?! (it is best to insert 5.fe ♘xe5) 5... exf4 6.♗xf4 d5! 7.e5 d4 8.a3 dc

9.ab cb?! 10.♖b1 ♘d5 11.♗g5 f6 12.ef gf 13.♗d2 ♕e7+ 14.♕e2 (14.♔f2?! a5!) 14...♘dxb4 15.♖xb2 a5 16.♕xe7+ ♔xe7 17.♗e2 b6 (17...♖e8!? 18.0-0 ♔d8) 18.0-0 ♗a6 19.♘h4 ♖hg8 20.h3 ♘d4 21.♗d1 against and White has compensation for the pawn due to his bishop pair. However, 9...♘d5!? improves Black's position significantly, or 8...♗xc3+!? 9.bc ♘d5 10.♗g5 f6 11.ef gf 12.♗d2 dc 13.♗c1 ♕d6 when White has nothing for the pawn in the closed position.

4. ... d7-d5!

Even if the pawn only progresses one rank it still can move forward at some point later on in the game. After 4...d6 5.♘c3 ♗e7 6.♗e2 0-0 7.0-0 ♖e8 8.d4 ed4 9.♘xd4 d5!? 10.e5 ♗c5 11.♗e3 ♘g4!? 12.♗xg4 ♗xg4 13.♕xg4 ♗xd4 14.♗xd4 ♘xd4 15.♖ad1 c5 16.♖d3 ♖e6 17.♖h3 ♕d7 18.♖g3 g6 19.f5 ♖xe5 20.fg ♕xg4 21.gf+ (Janowski – Halprin, Vienna 1898) 21...♔h8 22.♖xg4 ♖f8 the endgame is equal. Perhaps White should have tried to accelerate his attack: 15.f5 c5 16.f6 g6 17.♕g5 ♔h8 18.♕h6 ♖g8. Although g6-g5 and ♖g8-g6 parry White's direct mating threats, he still has a tangible initiative.

5. e4xd5 ...

In reply to 5.fe, Llanos – Reides (Buenos Aires 1999) is instructive: 5...dxe4 6.ef ef 7.♕xf3 ♘d4 8.♕e4+ ♗e6 9.fg ♗xg7 10.♔d1 (10.♘a3 0-0 11.♗d2 ♗xa2!, winning back the pawn with profit) 10...0-0 11.♘c3 ♖e8 12.♕f4 ♕e7 13.♗d2 ♕c5. White lagged behind in development, so he needed to exercise caution, which he failed to do: 14.♗e3? ♗g4+ 15.♔d2 ♖xe3! 16.♕xg4 (16.♕xe3 ♕b6!) 16...♖ae8 17.h4 ♕b4 18.♕g5 ♕xb2 19.♖c1 ♘f3+! with mate to follow.

5. ... ♘f6xd5
6. f4xe5 ♗c8-g4
7. ♗f1-e2 ...

The cautious game played by two little known players, Haapasalo – Mertanen (Finland 1996), is worth mentioning: 7.c3 ♗xf3 8.♕xf3 ♘xe5 9.♕e4 ♕e7! 10.d4 ♘g4 11.♗d3 c6 12.0-0 ♕xe4 13.♗xe4 ♗d6 14.h3 ♘gf6 15.♗f3 0-0 16.♗g5 ♖fe8 17.♘d2 ♗g3. The players reached a calm, equal position. There is one interesting variation: 10.♕xd5 ♘xd3++ 11.♔d2 ♘b4+ 12.cb ♖d8 13.♕xd8+ ♕xd8+ 14.♔c3 ♕d7, when the white king winds up being much more energetic than his humble subjects, and Black probably has better chances.

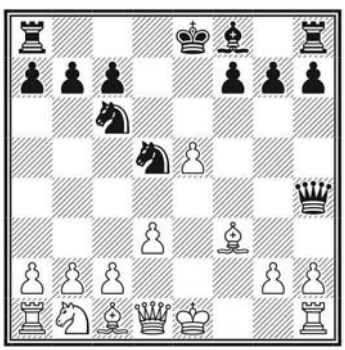
Let us check Alekhine's ancient analysis with an engine: 7.c3 ♘xe5(?!) 8.♕e2(?!) ♗d6 9.d4 ♗xf3 10.gf ♕h4+(?!) 11.♔d1 0-0-0 12.de(?!) ♖he8! 'with a crushing attack.' The attack is only enough for a draw: 13.♕g2 ♔b8 14.♔c2 ♗xe5 15.♘a3 ♘e3+ 16.♗xe3 ♕a4+ 17.b3 ♕xa3 18.♕f2 ♗xc3! 19.♔xc3 ♕a5+ 20.♔c2 ♕f5+ or 14.♗g5 ♗xe5 15.♗xh4 ♘e3+ 16.♔e2 ♗f6! 17.♔f2 (17.♗xf6?? ♘d1+!) 17...♗xh4+ 18.♔g1 ♖d1 19.♕e2

♖e6 20.h3 ♖xf1+ 21.♕xf1 ♖g6+ 22.♔h2 ♗g3+ 23.♔g1 ♗e1+. If 12.♕e4 (instead of 12.de?!) 12... ♕xe4 13.fe ♘g4 14.♗h3 ♘df6 15.♔c2 then Black will find it difficult to counteract his opponent's strong pawn center, so he should opt for 10...0-0! 11.de ♗xe5 12.♕f2 ♖e8 13.♗e2 ♗f4!, a promising continuation. These lines are not of practical purpose because the nifty 8.♕a4+! ♕d7 9.♕e4 stops ♗f8-d6, and Black would struggle being down a pawn after 9...f6 10.d4 ♗f5 11.♕e2 ♗d3 12.♘xe5 ♗xe2 13.♘xd7 ♗xf1 14.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 15.♖xf1.

7. ... ♗g4xf3

7...♗c5 keeps White from castling. Black faces no real difficulties (as Komora – V.Sergeev, Slovakia 1998 showed): 8.c3 ♗xf3 9.♗xf3 ♘xe5 10.d4 ♘xf3+ 11.♕xf3 ♗d6 12.0-0 0-0 13.♘d2 c6 14.♘e4 ♕c7 15.♘xd6 ♕xd6 16.♗f4 ♕d7 17.♕g3 f6 18.♖ae1 ♖ae8.

8. ♗e2xf3 ♕d8-h4+



In Maroczy – Alekhine (New York 1924) White voluntarily decided not to castle and after 9.♔f1? 0-0-0 10.♘c3 ♗c5 11.♘e4?! (11.♕e1, aiming to exchange queens, is stronger) 11... ♘e3+ 12.♗xe3 ♗xe3 13.♕e1 ♕h6 14.♘g3 ♘d4 15.♕b4 c6 16.♕a4? ♔b8 17.♖d1 ♖he8 he found himself in a bind. Raspor, possibly heeding to Alekhine's advice, equalized against Solak (Portoroz 2003): 9.g3 ♕d4 10.c3 ♕xe5+ 11.♕e2 ♕xe2+ 12.♔xe2 0-0-0 13.d4 ♗e7 14.♔f2 f5 15.♘d2 ♗f6 16.♘c4 ♖he8.

Game 10

G.Welling – I.Sokolov

Gibraltar 2009

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. d2-d3 d7-d5



Black launches a new attack on White's central pawn. White has three options: exchange the pawn, push it forward or have the knight back it up. However, 3.♘d2 will lay the groundwork for an Old Indian setup (for White) and it does

not really jive with the Alekhine Defense. 3.ed ♘xd5 4.♘f3 takes us to the Scandinavian Defense with 1.e4 d5 2.ed ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘xd5 4.d3, the last move being overly modest. It is as if the colors have been switched: 4...♘c6 5.♗e2 ♗f5 6.♘c3 e5 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.♘e4 ♕d7 9.♗d2 f6 10.a3 g5 11.♘g3 ♗e6 12.b4 g4 13.♘h4 ♘d4 14.c3 ♘xe2+ 15.♕xe2 0-0-0.

3. e4-e5 ♘f6-d7

4. f2-f4 ...

The knight defends the advanced e-pawn much more rarely. The position after 4.♘f3 c5 5.g3 e6 ♗g2 ♘c6 occurred in Appel – Swinkels (Germany 2010) through 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 ♘c6 4.♗g2 ♘f6 5.d3 d5 6.e5 (instead of the usual 6.♘bd2, which keeps some tension in the center) 6...♘d7. Then 7.♗f4 ♗e7 8.h4 h6 9.♘c3 a6 10.a4 ♖b8 11.h5 b5 12.ab ab 13.0-0 b4 14.♘e2 ♗b7 15.♕d2 ♖a8 16.c3 ♘b6 17.g4 c4 followed, and Black has a raging attack, while White is going after a kingside with no king there.

If 4.d4 then White probably has just transposed back to the French Defense and lost a tempo. After 4...c5 5.c3 ♘c6 6.♘f3 e6 7.♗e2 f6 (7...♗e7 and 8...0-0 is not bad either) 8.ef ♘xf6 9.0-0 ♗d6 10.♗e3 cd 11.cd 0-0 12.♘c3 a6 13.♗g5 ♗d7 14.♗h4 ♗e8 15.♘g5 ♕d7 16.♗g3 ♗g6 17.♗d3 ♗xg3 18.hg ♗xd3 19.♕xd3 e5 20.de ♘xe5 21.♕d4 ♘c6 22.♕d3 ♘e5 Zvjaginsev and Khairullin (Belgorod 2010) ended their encounter with a draw by repetition.

4. ... c7-c5

5. ♗f1-e2 ...

The bishop fianchetto is no better: 5.g3 ♘c6 6.♗g2 e6 7.♘f3 ♗e7 8.0-0 0-0 9.c3 b5 10.a4 ba (10...♕a5!?) 11.♕xa4 ♗b7 12.♘a3 ♘b6 13.♕d1 a5 14.♘c2 a4 15.♗e3 ♕d7 16.♗f2 ♖fb8 Todorcevic – Forcen, San Agustin 2012. White has nothing on the kingside to oppose Black's activity on the queenside.

5. ... ♘b8-c6

6. ♘g1-f3 e7-e6

In Van Dooren – Korneev (Tilburg 2006) Black liberated his problem bishop, and after 6...♘b6 7.c3 h6 8.♘a3 ♗f5 9.0-0 e6 10.♘c2 ♗e7 11.♘e3 ♗h7 12.d4 ♖c8 13.dc ♗xc5 14.b4 ♗e7 15.♘d4 0-0 16.a3 ♘xd4 17.♕xd4 ♘a4 18.♗d2 ♕b6 he achieved a much better setup. 8.d4 cd 9.♘xd4 ♘xd4 10.cd, fueling White's development, is much more consistent with 7.c3.

7. c2-c3 ...

Actually, the text game had different starting moves – 1.e4 c5 2.d3 ♘c6 3.f4 d5 4.♗e2 ♘f6 5.e5 ♘d7 6.c3 e6 7.♘f3, so Ivan Sokolov was concerned about much different variations. In particular, he did not have to worry about 7.c4!?. Further 7...d4 8.♘bd2 ♗e7 9.♘e4 a6 10.0-0 b5 11.b3 ♕b6 12.♗d2 ♗b7 13.♘fg5 h6 14.♘h3 a5 15.♘hf2 with a very complicated position is possible, Brunello – Papadopoulos, Greece 2012. It is not a bad idea to maintain

one's structure in the center with 7...♘b6 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♘c3 0-0.

7. ... ♗f8-e7

Black plans to attack on the queenside. He can start playing this position like the French Defense: 7...f6 8.d4 ♕b6 9.0-0 cd 10.cd fe 11.fe ♘dxe5 12.♘xe5 ♘xe5 13.♘c3 ♗d7 14.♗g5 Kupreichik – Ehlvest, Moscow 1983. The slow d2-d3-d4 cost White a pawn; however, he keeps his opponent from castling on either side, and his activity compensates for the pawn.

8. 0-0 b7-b5

9. ♘b1-a3 ...

Or 9.♗e3 ♘b6 10.d4 ♘c4 11.♗xc4 bc 14.dc ♕a5 15.♘a3 ♗xc5 16.♘c2 ♖b8 17.♕c1 ♗xe3+ 18.♘xe3 0-0, zeroing in on the pawns, which is enough for equality, Glek – Berkvens, Kallithea 2008.

9. ... b5-b4

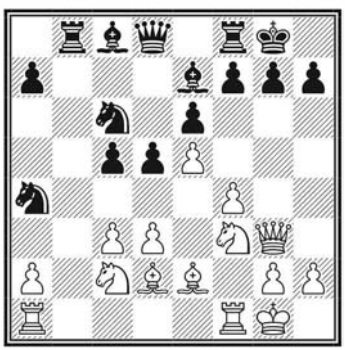
10. ♘a3-c2 b4xc3

11. b2xc3 ♘d7-b6

12. ♕d1-e1 ♘b6-a4

13. ♗c1-d2 ♖a8-b8

14. ♕e1-g3 0-0



White challenges Black on the only open file with 15.♖ab1 and gets a satisfactory position. Upon making some sloppy calculations, Welling launches a head-on attack, which came back to haunt him.

15. f4-f5?! e6xf5

16. ♗d2-h6 g7-g6

17. ♗h6xf8 ♘a4xc3

18. ♗f8xe7? ...

Apparently, the Dutch master was not planning on fighting for a draw after 18.♕e1 ♘xe2+ 19.♕xe2 ♗xf8. He would be up the exchange, but his pieces would be awkwardly placed. That would have been better, though.

18. ... ♘c3xe2+

19. ♔g1-f2 ♘e2xg3

20. ♗e7xd8 ♘g3xf1

21. ♗d8-f6 ...

Clearly, Welling was counting on winning the exchange here, too: 21...♖b2(?!) 22.e6 ♖xc2+ 23.♔xf1 fe 24.♘e1 ♔f7 25.♗h8 ♗a6 26.♘xc2 (the knight might get away). Sokolov had calculated a bit further.

21. ... ♘f1xh2!

22. ♘f3xh2 ♖b8-b2

23. ♖a1-c1 ♘c6-b4

24. e5-e6 d5-d4

25. e6-e7 ♗c8-d7

26. ♔f2-g1 ♖b2xc2

27. ♖c1xc2 ♘b4xc2

28. ♘h2-f3 ♘c2-b4

29. ♘f3-e5 ♗d7-a4

30. g2-g4 ♘b4-d5

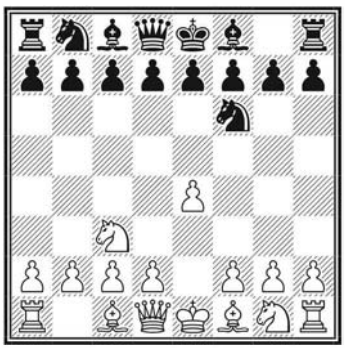
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So, after 2.d3 e5 3.f4 Black can equalize comfortably by making a temporary pawn sacrifice (d7-d5). If Black cannot recall all the right lines at the board then he can opt for 2... d5. In that case Black does not have to commit any complicated theory to memory, since he has a variety of choices. 2.d3 is like lobbing the ball over the net instead of serving it hard.

Part 2.
The Scandinavian System with 3.e5

Introduction

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♘b1-c3 ...



We saw this knight move many times in the historical background section (Games 3-5), but now it is time to evaluate this move in terms of modern chess theory. 2...e5 leads to the Vienna Game, so we shall only consider the other main pawn move.

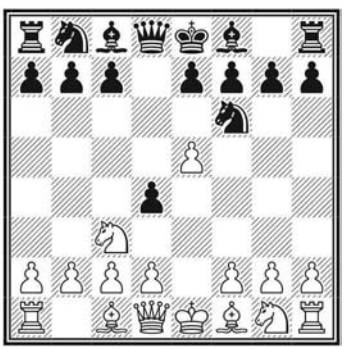
2. ... d7-d5

Now the game can follow one of two main continuations: 3.e5 (Part 2) or 3.ed (Part 3). The position after 3.ed ♘xd5 could arise out of the Scandinavian Defense (1.e4 d5 2.ed ♘f6 3.♘c3 ♘xd5), and the lines including 2.♘c3 d5 are generally dubbed the Scandinavian System.

Chapter 3. 3.e5 d4

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♘b1-c3 d7-d5
3. e4-e5 d5-d4

Diagram



Black strives to equalize as quickly as possible by attacking White's knight. Besides, he is ready to open up and simplify the position, unlike

with 3...♘fd7 (Chapter 4) and 3...♘e4 (Chapters 5-8).

4. e5xf6 ...

If White wants to avoid opening up the position and the ensuing simplifications then he should opt for 4.♘ce2 (Game 11).

4. ... d4xc3

5. f6xg7 ...

5.fe cd+ 6.♕xd2 ♕xd2+ 7.♗xd2 ♗xe7 is ideal for GM or last-round draws. Surprisingly enough, there have not been that many draws after 6.♗xd2 ♗xe7, although there is not much intrigue left in the position.

In reply to 5.bc the continuation 5...gxf6 6.d4 e5 7.♗c4 ♘c6 8.♕e2 ♕e7 9.♘f3 does not fully equalize. However, if 5...exf6, then Black has nothing to complain about. After 6.d4 ♗d6 7.♘f3 0-0 8.♗e2 c6 9.0-0 ♕c7 10.c4 ♖d8 11.c3 ♘d7 12.c5 ♗e7 (12...♘xc5?! 13.dc ♗xh2+ 14.♘xh2 ♖xd1 15.♖xd1 is a doubtful recommendation by Houdini) 13.♕b3 ♘f8 14.♖b1 ♖b8 15.g3 g5 16.♗c4 ♗e6 chances are equal, Piorun – Chetverik, Krakow 2014.

5. ... c3xd2+

6. ♗c1xd2 ...

Now theory has revitalized with lively the seemingly bland 4.ef branch, which cannot be said about an exchange of queens: 6.♕xd2 ♕xd2+ 7.♗xd2 ♗xg7 8.0-0-0 ♘c6 9.♘e2 ♗d7 10.♘g3 0-0-0 11.♗e2 ♗e6 12.♖he1 ♗d4 13.f4 ♗f2 14.♖f1 ♗xg3 15.hg ♘d4 16.♗h5 ♘f5 17.♗e1 ♖xd1+ 18.♗xd1 ♘e3 19.♖h1 ♘xd1 20.♔xd1, and opposite-colored bishops nearly preclude a draw shortly thereafter, Lerch – A.Barthel, Pardubice 2012. Many games, mostly short GM- or last-round draws have been played in this line.

6. ... ♗f8xg7

7. ♕d1-f3 ...

7.♕h5 has been played in addition to 7.c3 (with rough equality after 7...♘c6 8.♕a4 ♕d6 9.0-0-0 ♕g6 10.♘e2 e5). Many players have set their greedy eyes on b2, running into the mind-blowing 8.♕b5+!. Yu Yangyi and Abasov, two talented young players, agreed to a draw after 7...♕d4! 8.c3 ♕e4+ 9.♕e2 ♗f5 10.♕xe4 ♗xe4 11.♘e2 ♘d7 12.♘g3 ♗g6 13.f4 e6 14.♗e2 0-0-0 15.0-0-0 h5 16.f5 ef 17.♖hf1 f4 18.♗xf4 h4 19.♘h1 ♗e4 20.♘f2 ♗c6 21.g3 hg 22.hg f5 (Moscow 2010). The old game Honfi – Larsen (Copenhagen 1965) had been considered the main line following 9.♗e3 (instead of 9.♗e2): 9...♘c6 10.♘e2 ♗g4 11.♕g5 ♖g8 12.f3 ♕c2! 13.♕b5 (13.♕xg4?? ♘e5) 13...♗d7 14.♖c1 ♕f5 15.♕xf5 ♗xf5 16.♘g3 ♗e6 17.♗d3 h6 18.0-0 ♗xa2. White will have enough compensation for the pawn if he keeps his opponent from castling long with 19.♗h7 ♖h8 20.♗e4.

7. ... ♗g7xb2

Black should accept the challenge, because otherwise he would spend the next few moves

trying to neutralize White's robust advantage (as in the event of 7... ♕d6 8.0-0-0 ♕f6 9.♕xf6 ♗xf6 10.♗f4 c6 11.♘e2).

8. ♖a1-d1 ...

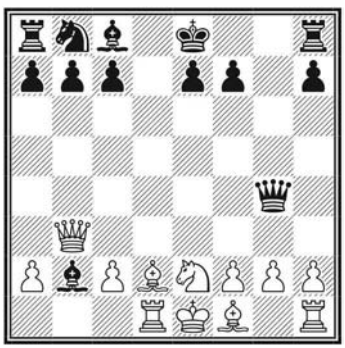
If 8.♗c4 ♗f6 9.♘e2 ♘d7 10.♗c3 ♗xc3+ 11.♕xc3 ♖g8 12.♖d1 White's lead in development and Black's extra pawn roughly balance each other out. The text move probably is weaker, although it is played much more often.

8. ... ♕d8-d4

8...♕d6!? 9.♗c4 ♕f6 10.♕b3 ♘d7! 11.c3 ♘e5! 12.♗e2 ♕e6 is interesting. White has to stop trying to catch Black's bishop, and then Black takes over.

9. ♘g1-e2 ♕d4-g4

10. ♕f3-b3 ...



Bagirov, following Bronstein's lead, marks 10...♗e5 with a question mark due to 11.♗c3, but he misses 11...♕e6!. If 10...♗f6 11.♘f4 ♘c6 12.♗e2 ♕f5 13.♘d5 ♗e5 14.♗c3 ♖g8 (Balashov – Alburt, Leningrad 1974) 15.g4! ♕e6 16.♗xe5 ♕xe5 17.♕g3 then White wins back material by picking up the c7-pawn, and now is in a position to think about gaining an advantage.

Game 11

S.Bogner – H.Westerinen

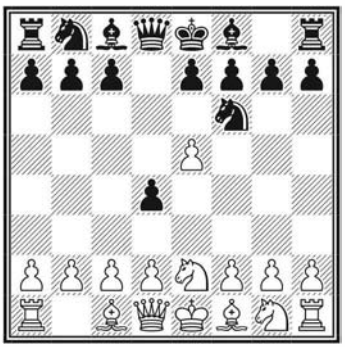
Neuhausen 2004

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6

2. ♘b1-c3 d7-d5

3. e4-e5 d5-d4

4. ♘c3-e2 ...



4. ... ♘f6-g4

Black has the typical d4-d3 pawn sacrifice, mirroring e5-e6 (if Black plays 4...♘fd7), which can be quite promising. After 4...d3!? 5.cd ♘d5 6.d4 ♘b4 7.♕b3 ♘8a6 White probably has to give back the pawn to finish his development. There is 5.♘f4 dc 6.♕f3?! (6.♕xc2 ♘d5 7.♘xd5 ♕xd5 8.♘f3 keeps the position balanced) 6...g5! 7.ef gf 8.♕xf4 ♘c6 9.♕e4 e5, and Black dominates. 5.ef de 6.♗xe2 is better and White has a slight advantage, regardless of what capture is made.

4...♘e4 is considered using a different move order: 3...♘e4 4.♘ce2 d4.

5. f2-f4 ...

If 5.♘f3 then 5...♘c6 6.h3 ♘gxe5 7.♘exd4 ♕d5! 8.♘xc6 ♕e4+! 9.♗e2 ♘xf3+ 10.gf ♕xc6 is possible. Black has decimated his adversary's pawns by making a subtle queen maneuver, and he has a better position.

5. ... ♘b8-c6

5...c5!? protects the pawn more firmly (and has a better reputation). For instance, there is 6.♘g3 g6 7.♗c4 ♘c6 8.♘e4 ♕a5 (8...♕b6!?) 9.c3 ♗f5 10.♘g3 e6 11.♘xf5 gf 12.♘f3 0-0-0 13.♕e2 (Karpatchev – Debray, Saint Affrique 2012) 13...♔b8 14.♘g5 ♘h6 15.0-0 ♖g8!? with a very complicated position.

6. ♘g1-f3 h7-h5

This pawn supports the knight and stops it, but Black seems to be conflating his static and dynamic capabilities. Nevertheless, the engine line of 6...f6 7.h3 ♘h6 8.c3 dc 9.bc!? fe 10.fe ♘f5 11.♘f4 g6, although dynamic, does not fully equalize.

7. c2-c3 d4xc3

8. b2xc3 ♕d8-d5!?

The Finnish GM keeps White's queen's rook and king's bishop dormant. Incidentally, if 8...e6 9.d4 ♗e7 10.♘g5 ♘h6 11.♘g3 h4 12.♘3e4 ♕d5 then Black has a slightly passive, yet solid position.

9. ♕d1-b3 e7-e6

10. h2-h3 ♘g4-h6

11. ♘e2-g3 ♕d5xb3

12. a2xb3 g7-g6

13. ♘g3-e4 ♗f8-g7

14. ♗c1-a3 ♘h6-f5

15. g2-g3 ...

White should have opted for a more aggressive setup — 15.♖g1, followed by g2-g4 at the right moment.

15. ... b7-b6

16. ♗f1-b5 ♗c8-b7

17. ♔e1-f2 a7-a6

18. ♗b5-d3 0-0-0

19. ♗d3-c2 ♘c6-a5

20. ♘f3-g5 ...

Bogner may have been counting on gradually expanding after 20...♖d7 21.♖hd1 and d2-d4, but his opponent launches a counterattack.



20. ... h5-h4!?

21. ♘g5xf7 ♘f5xg3

22. ♘f7xd8 ♘g3xh1+?!

22...♗xe4 23.♗xe4 ♘xe4+ 24.♔e3 ♖xd8 25.♔xe4 ♘xb3 26.♖a2 ♘xd2+ 27.♔e3 ♘c4+

28.♔e2 ♘xa3 29.♖xa3 ♖f8 maintains equality, unlike the text continuation.

23. ♖a1xh1 ♖h8xd8
24. d2-d4?! ...

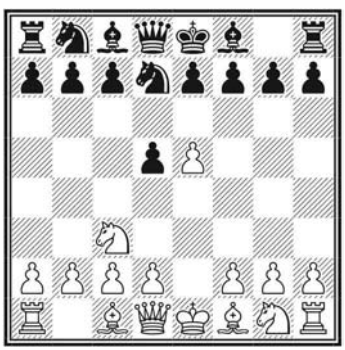
24.♔e3, covering two weak pawns simultaneously, is much better. Now a draw is only natural.

24. ... ♗g7-h6
25. ♖h1-g1 ♗h6xf4
26. ♖g1xg6 ♗b7-d5
27. ♗a3-e7 ♖d8-e8
28. ♗e7xh4 ♗d5xb3
29. ♗c2-d3 ♗b3-c4
30. ♔f2-e2 ♖e8-h8
31. ♗h4-g5 ♗c4xd3+
32. ♔e2xd3 ♖h8xh3+
33. ♔d3-c2 ♖h3-h2+
½ – ½

White can seek out complicated lines if he does not want to settle for dry, symmetrical positions. The complications do not necessarily favor White, so 3...d4 has some merit to it.

Chapter 4. 3.e5 ♘fd7

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♘b1-c3 d7-d5
3. e4-e5 ♘f6-d7



Now that Black's knight has retreated, White has four options, which are all roughly just as good. Two of his options were already considered in the historical background section — 4.♘xd5 (Game 3) and 4.f4 (Game 4). We shall encounter 4.e6 in Game 12.

4. d2-d4 c7-c5

4...e6 leads to the Steinitz variation in the French Defense. If Black does not want to block in his queen's bishop then he should let it free right away. After 4... ♘b6!? 5.♗f4 ♗f5 6.g4 ♗e6 7.h3 g6 8.♘f3 h5 9.♘g5 ♕d7 10.gh ♖xh5 11.♗e2 ♖h8 12.♕d2 ♗f5 13.0-0-0 ♘c6 both sides have roughly equal chances in the arising complicated position, Stein – Lutikov, Moscow 1969.

5. f2-f4 ...

Caution! It is already too late to return to the Nimzowitsch variation (4.♘xd5). After 5.♘xd5?! cd 6. ♕xd4 the pin along the d-file

comes back and hits White like a boomerang. It is worth noting that many players have made this mistake, and in almost half of the cases 6...♘c6?! saved White. 6...♘b6! followed by 7.c4 e6 8.♗g5 ♗b4+! 9.♔e2 ♕d7 10.a3 ed 11.ab ♘c6 12.♕c3 ♘xc4, is correct.

The position arising after 5.dc e6 6.♘f3 generally comes out of 1.e4 e6 2.♘f3 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.d4 c5 6.dc or 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.♘f3 c5 6.dc, which is slightly more rare. ♘either variation is our subject.

5. ... c5xd4

5...♘c6 6.♘f3 cd 7.♘xd4 ♘xd4 8.♕xd4 keeps the door open for a more suitable piece to appear on d4: 8...e6 9.♗e3 ♗c5 10.♕d2 ♕b6 11.♗xc5 ♕xc5 12.0-0-0 a6 13.h4 b5 14.♘e2 ♘b6 15.♘d4 with a minor advantage, K.Berg – Hillarp Persson, Denmark 1999.

6. ♘c3-b5 ...

Let us check centralizing the queen here: 6.♕xd4 e6 7.♗e3 ♘c6 8.♕d2 ♗b4 9.♘f3 f6!? 10.ef ♘xf6. The threat of ♘f6-e4 keeps White from exercising strong control over d4, but he has play on the kingside: 11.♗d3 0-0 12.a3 ♗a5 13.0-0-0 ♗d7 14.♖fg1 ♖c8 15.g4 Tuhrim – Shabalov, Indianapolis 2008.

6.♘ce2 ♘c6 7.♘f3, compared to the main continuation, allows 7...d3!?. Press – Bagirov (Yaroslavl 1982) continued 8.cd ♘b6 9.♘ed4 ♗g4 10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♘xf3 e6 12.d4 ♗e7 13.g3 ♖c8 14.♗d3 ♘b4 15.♗b1 ♕c7 16.0-0 ♘c2 17.♗xc2 ♕xc2 18.♕xc2 ♖xc2 19.♖f2 ♖c6. Black dominates the open file, so White should change the pawn structure with 10.♘xc6 bc 11.♕c2.

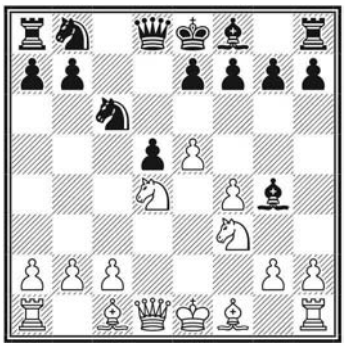
6. ... ♘b8-c6

7. ♘g1-f3 ♘d7-b8!?

This is a typical method in such positions — the knight vacates the d7-square to free the bishop. Paradoxically enough, the knight generally opts for b8. After 7...♘b6 8.♘bxd4 ♗g4 9.♗e2 e6 10.c3 ♗c5 11.0-0 a5 12.♔h1 0-0 13.♗e3 ♕e7 14.♕e1 ♖fc8 15.♗d3 ♗xd4 16.♘xd4 ♘xd4 17.♗xd4 ♘a4 18.♕f2 ♗f5 19.♗xf5 ef 20.♖fd1 (Libiszewski – Cosma, Val Thorens 1998) White won the battle for the key point d4, and his bishop had a decisive advantage over Black's knight. In the 7...♘c5 8.♘fxd4 (avoiding the ♗c8-g4 pin) 8...e6 9.♗e3 ♗d7 10.♘c3 a6 11.♗e2 ♗e7 12.0-0 0-0 13.a3 ♖c8 14.♕e1 ♘xd4 15.♗xd4 f5 16.ef ♗xf6 (Hector – Baburin, Copenhagen 2000) 17.♕f2 ♗xd4 18.♕xd4 ♕b6 variation the players reached an equal position.

The spectre of the French Defense is still roaming the board. The position after 7...e6 8.♘bxd4 generally arises in the French Defense: 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.♘e2 cd 8.♘exd4.

8. ♘b5xd4 ♗c8-g4



This bishop move equalizes, like in E.Berg – Zelcic, Kusadasi 2006: 9.♗e2 e6 10.♗e3 ♗xf3 11.♘xf3 ♘d7 12.0-0 ♗c5 13.♗xc5 ♘xc5 14.♔h1 g6. Nanu's sloppy play cost him the game against M.Grunberg (Bucharest 2002): 9.c3?! ♘xd4 10.cd ♘c6 11.♕b3 ♗xf3 12.♕xb7 ♕c8 13.♗a6?? ♗g4.

Game 12
V.Sejkora – M.Konopka
Czech Republic 2003

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**♘b1-c3**	**d7-d5**
3.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d7**
4.	**e5-e6!?**	**...**

Diagram

This pawn sacrifice was utilized by Rudolf Spielmann, who defeated two nearly unknown opponents with it – Landau in 1933 and Domenech one year later. But Yudovich, Canal and Mieses (three times) had gone in for this sacrifice before. Jacques Mieses may not have gone down in the chess history books because of his mediocre showing with this line (two draws and one loss).

This rather typical pawn sacrifice wrecks White's pawn chain and impedes his development. One should note that the real action takes place nearby d4 and e5, not the black king.



4.	**...**	**f7xe6**
5.	**d2-d4**	**c7-c5**

Black states his claim in the center. 5...g6 impels White to push his outside pawn: 6.h4 ♘f6?! 7.h5! ♘xh5 8.♖xh5! gh 9.♕xh5+ ♔d7 10.♘f3 ♗g7 11.♗h6 ♗f6 12.♘xd5! ed? (12...♕g8 13.♘f4 ♔d8 was necessary) 13.♕xd5+ ♔e8 14.♕h5+ ♔d7 Bellon – Kovacevic, Karlovac 1979, and 15.♘e5+! ♗xe5 16.de wins the queen. Nevertheless, 6...♗g7 7.h5 ♘f8 (Black can play ♘b8-c6 first, followed by ♘d7-f8) is rather solid.

If Black intends to castle and is concerned about h2-h4 then he should start with 5...♘f6. He can meet 6.h4 with 6...c5 7.dc e5, and

then e7-e6. There is absolutely no need to fianchetto the bishop.

6. ♗f1-d3 ...

If 6.dc ♘c6 7.♘f3 then winning back the pawn with 7...♘xc5 forces Black to cede the dark squares in the center (after 8.♗b5). Black should just fianchetto the bishop as in Garbisu de Goni – Del Rio de Angelis, San Juan 2008: 7... g6 8.♘d4 ♘db8!? 9.♘xc6 ♘xc6 10.♗b5 ♗g7 11.♕f3 ♗d7 12.0-0 ♘d4 13.♗xd7+ ♕xd7 14.♕d3 0-0 15.♗e3 ♘f5 16.♖ad1 ♖ad8 17.♖fe1 ♕c6. The outcome of this game between two strong Spanish masters was not in limbo for long – 18.♗f4?! ♕xc5 19.♖xe6?? ♗xc3 20.bc ♘g7 21.♗e3 ♕c7, and White capitulated.

An intense struggle ensues after 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.♗b5 g6 8.♗e3 ♗g7 9.dc ♕a5 10.0-0 0-0 11.♗xc6 bc 12.♖e1 ♖b8 (Froewis – Zelcic, Schwarzach 2007). Let us get out of this bind with 8...e5!?. Then 9.de d4 10.e6 ♘f6? 11.♗xd4! cd 12.♘xd4 is not good, but 10... ♘db8!? 11.♘xd4!? cd 12.♕xd4 ♕xd4 13.♗xd4 ♖g8 14.♘d5 ♘a6 15.♗xa6 ♘xd4 16.♘c7+ ♔d8 17.♘xa8 ba 18.♖d1, with an unclear endgame, is stronger.

6. ... g7-g6

6...♘f6 also parries the mate threat. If 7.dc e5 8.♗g5 e6 then Black's mighty pawn cluster in the center puts White in a tough position. After 7.♘f3 ♘c6 8.♗f4 c4 9.♗e2 g6 10.♕d2 ♗g7 11.♗h6 ♗xh6 12.♕xh6 ♕b6 13.0-0-0 ♗d7 14.♔b1 0-0-0 (L.B. Hansen – P.Varga, Budapest 1994) White struggles to maintain equality in this closed position.

7. d4xc5 ...

White's attacking resources are limited. Khader – S.Pavlov (Kiev 2008) is living proof: 7.♕g4?! ♗g7 8.♕xe6?! (8.♘f3 cd 9.♘xd4 ♘f8 is relatively better) 8...cxd4 9.♘b5 ♘b6 10.♗xg6+ hg 11.♕xg6+ ♔f8 12.♘f3 ♘c6 13.h4 ♘d7 14.♘bxd4 ♘xd4 15.♘xd4 ♗xd4 16.♗h6+ ♖xh6 17.♕xh6+ ♗g7 18.♕f4+ ♔g8, and White has not got any compensation for his losses.

7. ... ♗f8-g7

8. h2-h4 ♕d8-a5

White's initiative is contingent upon his light-squared bishop, so it makes sense for Black to exchange it off. After 8...♘xc5 9.h5 ♘xd3+ 10.♕xd3 gh 11.♖xh5 ♘c6 12.♖xh7 (Castiglione – Konopka, Slovakia 1995) 12...♗xc3+ 13.bc ♖xh7 14.♕xh7 ♕d6 the players have equal chances. 10...d4! 11.♘ce2 ♕a5+ 12.♗d2 ♕f5 stops White's onslaught even more effectively.

9. ♗c1-d2 ♕a5xc5

10. h4-h5 ♘d7-e5

Black returns to his original plan — he wants to exchange off White's bishop. It is unclear who has the upper hand after the dust settles: 10...♖f8 11.♘f3 e5 12.hg e4 13.♘xe4 de 14.♗xe4 ♘f6 15.♗d3 h5.

11. h5xg6 ♘e5xd3+
12. c2xd3 h7xg6
13. ♖h1xh8+ ♗g7xh8
14. ♕d1-g4 ♘b8-c6
15. ♕g4xg6+ ...

If 15.♘f3!? then Black cannot fianchetto his bishop immediately because e6 would be hanging. White has a more pleasant position.

15. ... ♔e8-d7
16. ♘g1-f3 b7-b6
17. ♖a1-c1 ...

Bosman and De Jager (Netherlands 2000), who had already blazed this trail, could have smoked the pipe of peace after 17.a3 a5 18.♖c1 ♗a6 19.♘g5 (19...♗f6 20.♘xe6 ♔xe6 21.♕g4+ ♔f7 22.♕h5+ with perpetual check).

17. ... ♗c8-a6
18. ♘c3-e4 ♕c5-b5
19. ♘f3-g5 ♘c6-d4
20. ♗d2-f4 ♖a8-c8

Perpetual check is all over the place—both in the 20...e5 21.♕h7 ♕xd3 22.♖c7+ ♔xc7 23.♕xe7+ variation and the text.

21. ♖c1xc8 ♗a6xc8



22. ♘e4-d6! e7xd6
23. ♕g6-h7+ ♔d7-c6
24. ♕h7xh8 ♕b5xd3
25. ♕h8xc8+ ♔c6-b5
26. ♕c8-d7+ ♔b5-a6
27. ♕d7-a4+ ♔a6-b7
28. ♕a4-d7+
½ – ½

It is time to say that "3...♘fd7 is better than 3...d4, indeed!" At the very least, White cannot make the position so dry, and it is harder for lower-rated players to play for a draw. 4.e6, although it can be challenging over the board, is dubious, objectively speaking.

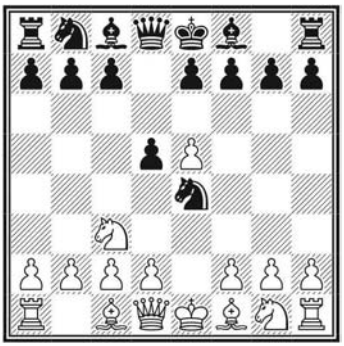
Chapter 5.
Various continuations after 3.e5 ♘e4

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♘b1-c3 d7-d5
3. e4-e5 ♘f6-e4

Diagram

Consistently following the idea inherent in 1...♘f6. The knight provokes pawn thrusts, thereby forcing White to neglect development. Up until the 1970's

hardly any players centralized the knight; however, Anatoly Karpov did so at the 1969 USSR Championship.



4. d2-d4 ...

4.♘ce2, the strongest reply, is analyzed in the next three chapters. We shall see 4.♘xe4 de in Game 13.

If 4.♕f3, then 4...♘c6 (planning 5.♘xe4 ♘d4 6.♕c3 de) is probably far from perfect. After 5.♗b5 ♘xc3 6.♕xc3 ♕d7 7.♘f3 a6 8.♗xc6 ♕xc6 9.♕xc6+ bc 10.d4 ♗f5 11.♗e3 h6 12.♔d2 e6 13.a3 ♔d7 14.♘e1 f6 15.♘d3 ♗e7 16.b4 a5 Zezulkin – V.Sergeev, Czech Republic 2003, the Ukrainian GM was left with a wrecked pawn structure, but he wrapped up his development somehow and started chipping away at his opponent's queenside.

Black should exchange knights immediately. If 4...♘xc3 5.♕xc3 d4 6.♕f3 a6 then he can develop his knight to c6 without it getting pinned. It is useful to illustrate one possible line following 5.dc, chosen by Vladimir Bagirov (against Arapovic, Moscow 1985): 5...g6 6.♗f4 ♗g7 7.0-0-0 c6 8.h4 h5 9.♕e3 ♕b6 10.♕d2 ♗g4 11.f3 ♗e6 12.♘h3 ♗xh3 13.♖xh3 e6 14.c4 ♘d7 15.♗e3 ♕c7 16.f4 a6 17.cd cd 18.♗d4 ♖c8 19.♖c3 ♕d8 20.♖xc8 ♕xc8 with a solid position. There is one more modern example, Compton – Tischbierek, Gibraltar 2013: 5...c5 6.♗e3 e6 7.♕g3 ♘c6 8.♗b5 ♕a5 9.♗xc6+?! bc 10.♗d2 ♕a4! 11.b3 ♕e4+ 12.♔d1 ♗a6. Black has better chances, so White should have impeded his queen maneuver by playing 9.a4.

4. ... ♘e4xc3

5. b2xc3 ...

White's pawn chain is starting to unravel. Also, it is become relatively immobile. Compared to the French Defense, the knight is active, not the bishop, which favors Black. In the 5...e6 6.f4 c5 7.♘f3 ♘c6 8.♗e2 ♕a5 9.♗d2 c4 10.0-0 ♗a3 variation Black encounters no real difficulties. However, there is no need for Black to block in his queen's bishop.

5. ... c7-c5

From now on White has to watch out for both c5xd4 and c5-c4. 5... ♗f5 is rather good either. After 6.♘e2 e6 7.♘g3 ♗g6 8.♗d3 c5 9.♖b1 ♕c7 10.0-0 ♘c6 11.♗e3 Ubilava – A.Petrosian, Sukhumi 1970, Black should have kept the position balanced by playing 11... cxd4 12.cd ♖c8 13.c4 dc 14.♗xg6

hg 15.♕a4 ♕d7 16.♕xc4 ♗e7, and then 0-0.

6. ♘g1-f3 ...

f2-f4 does not exert any additional pressure on Black's position. It is substantial that the black king has not committed to a particular flank, and it will hide away on the least dangerous side of the board.

6.f4 ♘c6 7.♘f3 (7.♗e3 ♕a5 8.♕d2 c4! 9.♗e2 ♗f5 10.♗f3 h5 11.♘e2 e6, and Black has a superb position) 7...♗g4 8.♗e2 e6 9.0-0 ♗e7 10.h3 ♗h5 (an exchange on f3 seems more challenging and may be stronger) 11.♖b1 ♕c7 12.♗e3 c4 13.g4 ♗g6 14.♘e1 f6 15.f5 ♗f7 16.ef gf 17.fe ♗xe6 18.♘g2 0-0-0 19.♘f4 ♗f7 20.♗f3 ♕a5 21.♕d2 ♔b8 22.♔h1 ♔a8 23.♗f2 ♖he8 24.♗g2 a6 25.♗g3, and White has a palpable initiative in Yudasin – Ehlvest, Biel 1993. Yudasin recommended 14...f5 15.ef ♗xf6 — it is hard for White's bishops (well, and all of his other pieces) to make themselves useful.

6. ... ♘b8-c6

Some players prefer 6...♗g4 to avoid thinking about the prophylactic 7.h3. However, if 6...♘c6 7.h3 ♗f5 8.♗d3 ♗xd3 9.♕xd3 e6 10.0-0 ♖c8 11.♗d2 ♗e7 12.g3 0-0 13.♔g2 cd 14.cd ♘b4 (Blasl – Kunin, Schwarzach 2010) 15.♗xb4 ♗xb4 16.♖ab1 ♖c3 17.♕b5 a5 18.♕xb7 ♕c8 19.♕xc8 ♖fxc8 then Black is in the driver's seat. Apparently, White has to pick up a pawn to compensate for his uncomfortable position: 8.dc e6 9.♖b1 ♕c7 10.♗e3 ♗e4!?.

7. ♗f1-e2 ♗c8-g4

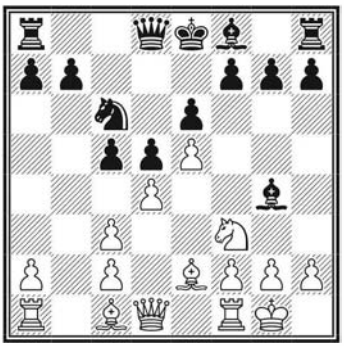
The simple developing move, 7...♗f5, is more modest, but no weaker. For example, 8.0-0 e6 9.♖b1 ♕c7 10.♗a3 ♗e4 11.♘d2 ♗g6 with a more promising position.

8. 0-0 ...

After 8.♖b1 ♕d7 White has lashed out in the center with 9.c4!? a few times – and has not been ever rebuffed with 9...dc!. If 10.d5 (10.dc 0-0-0 with excellent play) 10...♗xf3 11.♗xf3 ♘xe5 12.♗e2 or 12.0-0 then White will have to prove he has real compensation for the sacrificed pawns.

The sloppy 8...♖b8?! urged Baklan to storm Miroshnichenko's fortress (Alushta 1999): 9.e6! ♗xe6 10.♗f4 ♖c8 11.♖xb7 c4 (♕d8-a5 would have restrained his opponent on this and the next move) 12.♘g5 ♗d7?! 13.♗g4 e6 14.♕f3 ♕f6? (14...♕e7 15.h4 ♘d8 16.♖xa7 ♘c6, kicking the rook off the 7th rank, would have been more persistent) 15.♖xd7! ♔xd7 16.♘xf7! h5 17.♗h3 ♕f7 18.♕xd5+ ♔e7 19.♗g5+ ♔e8 20.♗xe6 ♕c7 21.♗xc8 ♕xc8 22.0-0, and White celebrated his victory shortly thereafter.

8. ... e7-e6



Black wraps up his development easily and enjoys some strategic advantages. After 9.♖b1 ♖b8 10.h3 ♗h5 11.♗g5 ♗e7 (11...♕d7!?) 12.♗xe7 ♕xe7 13.♖b5 ♗xf3 14.♗xf3 0-0 15.♕d3 a6 16.♖bb1 b5 17.♕e3 ♕a7 Vaisman – Alburt, Bucharest 1978, Black's kingside is perfectly safe, and he has got a world of opportunity on the queenside. Or 9.a4 ♗e7 10.♗e3 0-0 11.h3 ♗h5 12.♖e1 ♖c8 13.♖b1 ♘a5 14.g4 ♗g6 15.♗d3 cd 16.cd b6 17.♖e2 ♘c4 with successful relocation of the knight, Fowler – Arkell, Bournemouth 2012.

Game 13
B.Rytov – A.Karpov
Leningrad 1969

Examples of the 12th World Chess Champion employing the Alekhine Defense are few and far between. In 1970 Karpov had an opening disaster versus Oleg Dementiev (in the exchange variation). He never had as many difficulties with any other opening as he did with the Alekhine Defense.

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♘b1-c3 d7-d5
3. e4-e5 ♘f6-e4
4. ♘f3xe4 d5xe4



The pawns stand back to back, and that transfiguration probably favors Black. The d-file is more valuable for the black queen than the d1-h5 diagonal is for its counterpart.

5. d2-d4 ...

An en passant capture and d3 can lead to the same position. 5...♗f5 is an interesting reply to 5.d3, and the pawn can be set into motion once again.

5. ... e4xd3

After 5...♗f5 6.♘e2 e6 7.♗e3 c5 8.dc ♘d7 9.♘d4 ♗xc5 10.♗b5 Klip – V.Bagirov, Dieren 1990, the strongest reply is 10...♗xd4 11.♗xd7+ ♕xd7 12.♕xd4 ♕xd4 13.♗xd4 0-0, and Black can draw easily. But Bagirov, whose rating outweighed his opponent's, strove

for an asymmetrical position and continued 10...♖c8 11.0-0 a6 12.♗g5 ♕c7 13.♗xd7+ ♕xd7 14.♘b3 ♕xd1 15.♖axd1 ♗b6 16.c3 ♗c7 17.♘c5 ♗xe5 18.♘xb7 f6 19.♗e3. He achieved his goal, but actually failed to equalize. Miraculously enough, Black hung on and drew.

6. ♗f1xd3 ...

A queen exchange is completely harmless. For instance, 6.♕xd3 ♕xd3 7.♗xd3 ♘c6 8.f4 g6 9.♗e3 ♘b4 10.♔e2 ♘xd3 11.cd ♗g4+ 12.♘f3 0-0-0 13.♖hd1 ♖d5 14.h3 ♗xf3+ 15.♔xf3 e6 16.♔e4 ♖b5 17.♖ab1 ♗e7 18.b3 ♗a3, and White is the one fighting for equality, Orgovan – M.Grunberg, Hungary 2002. Or 8.♗f4 g5! 9.♗xg5 ♘xe5 10.♗e4 ♗g7 11.0-0-0 ♘c4 12.b3 (12.c3 f6! 13.♗h4 ♗h6+ 14.♔c2 ♘d6) 12...♘d6 13.♗d3 ♗g4 14.f3 ♗f5 15.♘e2 h6 16.♗e3 (16.♗h4!? would have kept Black from connecting his rooks) 16...0-0-0 17.♘g3 ♗xd3 18.♖xd3 h5 19.♗c5 h4 20.♗xd6 cd 21.♘f5 ♗f6 22.♖e1 ♔d7, gradually outplaying White in W.Huebner – Chetverik, Bad Ems 2013.

6. ... ♘b8-c6

7. ♘g1-f3 ...

If 7.♗f4 ♕d5 8.♕f3? ♕a5+ then Black picks up a central pawn without being punished. 7.f4 would protect it, and 7...♕d5 8.♕f3 ♕xf3 9.♘xf3 ♗g4 10.♔f2 e6 11.h3 ♗c5+ 12.♗e3 ♗xe3+ 13.♔xe3 ♗xf3 14.♔xf3 0-0-0 15.♖ad1 ♖d7 16.c3 gives White a minor edge because his bishop slightly overpowers Black's knight in Afek – Chetverik, Leuven 2004. 7...♘b4 8.♗e4 ♕xd1+ 9.♔xd1 ♗g4+ 10.♔e1 0-0-0 11.♘e2 e6 is more precise and pleasant for Black.

7. ... ♗c8-g4

8. h2-h3 ...

A familiar problem arises after 8.♗f4 ♕d5 9.h3 ♗xf3 10.♕xf3 ♕a5+ (a queen exchange is acceptable, too) 11.c3. Krizsany did not want to settle for a draw against Sprenger (Lippstadt 1999) by way of 11...♘xe5 12.♕xb7 ♘xd3+ 13.♔f1 ♖d8 14.♕c6+ ♖d7 15.♕a8+ ♖d8. But he could not even draw in a slightly worse endgame after 11...0-0-0 12.0-0 ♘xe5 13.♗xe5 ♕xe5 14.♗c4 ♕f6 15.♕xf6 gf 16.♗xf7 ♗h6 17.♖fe1 e5 18.♖ad1.

8. ... ♗g4xf3

Karpov wins a pawn, but his calculations are a bit off. He should have thought about 8...♗h5 (9.e6!? fe 10.0-0 ♕d6 11.♗e3 0-0-0).

9. ♕d1xf3 ♕d8-d4

10. 0-0 d4xe5

Black still could have applied the brakes: 10...e6 11.♗b5 ♕d5 12.♕xd5 ed 13.♗e3 0-0-0.

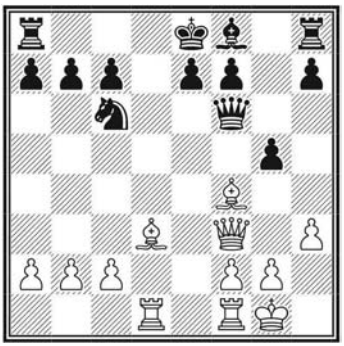
11. ♗c1-f4 ...

Essentially, 11.♗a6! leaves Black with one viable defense – 11...e6 12.♗xb7 ♘d4 13.♗c6+ ♔e7 14.♕e4 ♕xe4 15.♗xe4 ♖b8. It is by no means easy to hold that endgame.

11. ... ♕e5-f6

12. ♖a1-d1 g7-g5?!

Karpov shies away from the probable draw that would follow after 12...e5 13.♗xe5! ♕xf3 14.gf ♘xe5 15.♖fe1 f6 16.f4 ♗d6 17.fe fe 18.f4. Rytov has been afforded another chance at landing a left hook.



13. ♗f4xc7?! ...

In the 13.♗a6! ba 14.♖d6! ed 15.♕xc6+ ♔d8 16.♕xa8+ ♔d7 17.♗d2 ♕xb2 18.♕d5 variation Black faces some other problems (relative to 11.♗a6!) – namely, his king position is shaky.

13. ... ♕f6xf3
14. g2xf3 ♗f8-g7
15. ♗d3-f5?! 0-0?!

The situation has changed, and now Black could contend for the win with 15...♘d4 16.♗e4 ♖c8 17.♗h2 f5 18.♗xb7 ♖xc2. So, 15.c3, not allowing the knight to post up in the center, would have been more cautious.

16. ♗f5-e4 ♖a8-c8

16...♗xb2 17.♖d7 ♗f6 18.♖b1 ♘d4 19.♗xb7 ♖ae8 looks terribly dangerous for Black, but Houdini is not fazed by it.

17. ♖d1-d7 ♘c6-e5
18. ♗c7xe5 ♗g7xe5
19. ♖d7xb7 ♖c8-c7
20. ♖b7-b5 ♗e5-f4
21. ♖f1-d1 e7-e6
22. c2-c3 f7-f5
23. ♗e4-c2 ♔g8-f7

It is unclear how White can win this endgame. He has to push his queenside pawns, but his wrecked kingside does not really let him do so.

24. ♔g1-f1 ♔f7-f6
25. ♔f1-e2 h7-h5
26. ♖d1-d4 ♖f8-f7
27. ♗c2-d3 h5-h4
28. a2-a4 ♖f7-d7
29. ♖d4xd7 ♖c7xd7
30. a4-a5 ...

Now Karpov exchanges the second pair of rooks and draws comfortably. 30.b4 would have been met by a surprising tactical resource – 30...♗g3! (31.fg? hg 32.♗c4? ♖d1!).

30. ... ♖d7-d5
31. b2-b4 g5-g4
32. f3xg4 f5xg4
33. h3xg4 h4-h3
34. ♖b5xd5 e6xd5
35. ♔e2-f3 ♔f6-g5
36. b4-b5 ...

36.♗f5 ♗e5 37.b5 ♗c7 38.b6 ab 39.a6 ♗b8 40.♗e6 ♔h4 41.♗xd5 h2 42.♔g2 ♔xg4, a more precise continuation, is insufficient, too. The h-pawn has ventured out too far, and the a- and f-pawns are too spread out.

36.	**...**	**h3-h2**
37.	**♔f3-g2**	**♔g5xg4**
38.	**♗d3-e2+**	**♔g4-f5**
39.	**♗e2-f3**	**♔f5-e6**
40.	**♔g2-f1**	**♗f4-c7**
41.	**b5-b6**	**a7xb6**
42.	**a5-a6**	**♗c7-b8**
43.	**♔f1-e2**	**b6-b5**

½ - ½

Of the three sharp continuations, only 4.♕f3 can be recommended. An exchange on e4 is only good if White is content with a draw. 5.d4 is not a commendable continuation.

Chapter 6. 3.e5 ♘e4 4.♘ce2 ♘c5

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**♘b1-c3**	**d7-d5**
3.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-e4**
4.	**♘c3-e2**	**...**



This knight's retreat creates a threat d2-d4 and f2-f3. It is so potent that it justifies the pretentiousness of the move.

4. ... **♘e4-c5**

Black's knight starts running for the hills immediately. We shall consider 4...f6 in Chapter 7 and 4... d4 in Chapter 8.

5. d2-d4 **♘c5-e6**

The knight is only getting in the way of its own bishops on this square, so it generally moves on from here. Gallivanting around the board contradicts the most fundamental opening principles, but White is in no rush to activate his forces, either and the position is closed for now.

6. f2-f4 **...**

6.♗e3 pursued two aims. Setting up a battery along the c1-h6 diagonal is not very effective because the knight is covering g7: 6...g6 7.♕d2 b6 8.♘h3 ♗a6 9.0-0-0 ♕d7 10.g4 ♘c6 11.♗g2 ♗xe2 12.♕xe2 ♘a5 with equal chances, Lukjanenko – Chetverik, Voronezh 1987. Bachin tried out 7.c4 in reply to 6...g6 against Tomashevsky (Rybinsk 2001). There followed 7...c6 8.cd cd (if 8...♕xd5 9.♘c3 ♕d7 10.♘f3 ♘c7 11.♕b3 then it'll be hard to post up a piece on d5) 9.♘c3 ♘c6 10.g3 ♘c7 11.♗g2 ♗g7 12.♘ge2 e6 13.♕d2 b6 14.♗h6 (in this position the battery seems more promising, but it is nothing incredible) 14... ♗xh6 15.♕xh6 ♗a6 16.♕g7 ♖f8

17.♕xh7 ♘b5 18.♘xb5 ♗xb5 19.♘c3 ♘xd4 20.♘xb5 ♘xb5 21.0-0 ♘d4 22.♖fd1 ♘f5 with tendency to equality.

After 6.♘f3 c5 now 7.c3 is too modest. For instance, 7...♘c6 8.g3 g6 9.♗g2 ♗g7 10.0-0 0-0 11.♖e1 a6 12.♗e3 c4 13.♘h4 ♘c7 14.f4 (Kiik – Kutsyn, Tallinn 1988) 14... ♗g4 with decent prospects on the queenside. Let us check 7.c4!? – 7... ♘xd4 8.♘exd4 cd 9.♕xd4 e6 10.cd ♕xd5 11.♗c4 ♗b4+ 12.♔e2 ♕xd4 13.♘xd4 a6 14.♖d1 b5 15.♗d3 ♗b7 16.a4 ba 17.♖xa4 ♗e7 with a calm, equal position, Boidman – Kais, Moehnesee 2010. Perhaps White can contend for an advantage with 11.♕xd5 ed 12.♗b5+ ♘c6 13.♗e3.

6. ... g7-g6

The pawn frees up g7 for the knight, not the bishop! The 'fianchettoed' knight performs a strictly defensive function — first and foremost, it guards f5, a key square. After 6...c5 7.c3 cd 8.f5! ♘c5 9.♘xd4 e6 10.♗b5+ ♗d7 11.♗xd7+ ♘bxd7 12.♘gf3 ♕b6 13.0-0 Black was unable to cut through with e6-f5-g6, so equality eluded him.

7. ♘g1-f3 ...

7.♗e3 hinders an immediate c7-c5, but it is still played much less often. After 7...♘g7 8.♗f2 ♗g4 9.h3 ♗xe2 10.♗xe2 e6 11.♘f3 ♗e7 12.0-0 ♘d7 13.c3 a6 14.b4 c6 15.g4 Bergez – Chetverik, Lienz 2011, Houdini lauds Black's position, although there does not seem to be anything special about it. F4-f5 is in the cards, though.

7. ... c7-c5

8.h3 h5 9.♗e3 is the best reply to 7...♘g7, and moving the bishop to f5 is dubious because of 9... ♗f5 10.c4 e6 11.cd ed 12.♕b3 – it is time to drop the bishop back. V.Sergeev's concrete play against Saric (Pardubice 2005) is worth examining: 7...b6 8.♗e3 ♗a6 9.♕d2 ♘c6 10.g4 ♘a5 11.b3 ♘g7 (only because of the threat f4-f5) 12.♘g3 ♗c8!? (shifting off the diagonal provokes an undesirable change in the pawn structure) 13.g5 ♗g4 14.♕c3 c6 (14...♗xf3?? 15.♗b5+) 15.♘d2 ♕d7 16.a4 e6 17.b4 ♘b7 18.a5. Unlike usual, White attacks on the queenside, but if 18...bxa5 19.ba ♘d8 20.♖b1 ♕c7 then the onslaught does not look particularly promising.

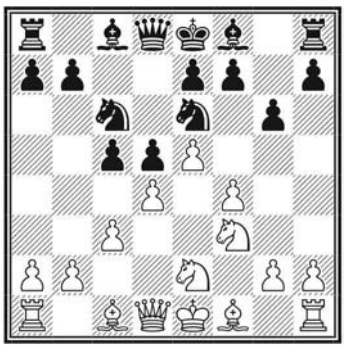
8. c2-c3 ...

White should pay attention to 8.dc!? ♘xc5 9.♗e3. If 9...♘e4 10.♘d2 ♘xd2 11.♕xd2 then he has a lead in development and control over the pivotal d4-square.

It is not a bad idea to crank up the tension in the center with 8.c4!?. In the lines 8...cxd4 9.♘exd4 ♘c6 10.♘xe6 ♗xe6 11.♘g5 dc 12.♕xd8+ ♘xd8 13.♘xe6 ♘xe6 14.♗xc4 ♘d4 15.♔f2 and 10.♘xc6 bc 11.cd ♕xd5 12.♕c2 ♗h6 13.♗c4 (it is logical to meet 13.f5 by repeating moves: 13... ♕a5+ 14.♔d1 ♕d5+ 15.♔e1 ♕a5+) 13...♘d4 14.♘xd4 ♕xd4

(Khodko – Chetverik, Kecskemet 1995) 15.♕d3 ♕xd3 16.♗xd3 an exchange of queens gives White slightly better prospects. We recommend Black to shoot for an asymmetrical position: 8...dxc4 9.d5 ♘c7 10.♘c3 b5 (which does involve some strategic risk, though).

8. ... ♘b8-c6



After 9.♗e3 or 9.g3 Black can close the position and take over more space with c5-c4. Black will not make any noticeable progress on the queenside in the near future, but his kingside is relatively safe for now. For instance, 9.g3 c4 10.f5 ♘g7 (10...gxf5 11.♗h3 ♘c7 12.♘f4 e6 is just as good) 11.fg hg 12.♗g2 ♗f5 13.0-0 e6 14.h3 (Khamatgaleev – Chetverik, Gyor 1997) 14... ♗e7 15.g4 ♗d3 with a roughly equal position.

In the odd-looking 3...♘e4 4.♘ce2 ♘c5 variation, events are not very exciting, as a rule. Generally, the positions are closed, and White has mildly better prospects.

Chapter 7. 3.e5 ♘e4 4.♘ce2 f6

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♘b1-c3 d7-d5
3. e4-e5 ♘f6-e4
4. ♘c3-e2 f7-f6



Now the knight has a pawn to prop him up and can step back in any direction. Arthur Bisguier was the first to attempt this line (against Van Geet in 1961), and then Lev Alburt made this continuation part of his opening arsenal. Unfortunately, Bagirov could not recognize one of the most fundamental theorists of the Alekhine Defense, Lev Alburt, because the latter had emigrated from the USSR to the USA, so all of his games were censored during Soviet times.

5. d2-d3 ...

Alburt's first attempt at clamping down on 5.♘f3 did not pan out very well: 5...♗g4?! 6.d3 ♘c5 7.d4 ♘e4 8.h3 ♗d7 9.♘f4 e6 10.♗d3 c5? Knezevic – Alburt, Decin 1976, and 11.♗xe4 de 12.♘g5! crushes Black's fortress. 10...f5, although more sturdy, is strategically unsound. 8...♗xf3 is dubious because of 9.gf ♘g5 10.♗xg5 fg 11.♖g1 e6 12.♕d2 ♗e7 13.h4, so the logic behind moving the bishop to g4 seems shaky.

Nevertheless, equalizing against the ex-world champion is exemplary: 5...fxe5 6.d3 ♘d6 7.♘xe5 ♘d7 8.♘xd7 ♗xd7 9.♘f4 c6 10.♕e2 ♘f7 11.d4 g6 12.♘e6 ♗xe6 13.♕xe6 ♗g7 14.c3 ♕d6 15.♕xd6 ♘xd6 16.f4 ♔d7 17.♗d3 b5 Smyslov – Alburt, Leningrad 1977. The bishop pair does not give White the edge because the position is closed.

5. ... ♘e4-g5

The knight maneuver from Chapter 6 does not jive with f7-f6 whatsoever: 5...♘c5 6.d4 ♘e6 7.f4 c5?! 8.f5 ♘xd4?! 9.♘xd4 cd 10.♕h5+ ♔d7 11.e6+ ♔c7 12.♗f4+ ♔b6 13.♘e2 – just like chess during the Middle Ages! 7...f5 8.g4! g6 9.gf gf 10.♘g3 ♘g7 11.♘h5 ♘e6 12.♘f3 does not help Black to consolidate, and he has to defend with 7...g6 8.h4 ♘g7.

6. ♗c1xg5 ...

Chess theorists have not made up their mind on 6.♘f4 yet. 6...e6 7.♘f3 ♘f7 8.ef gf 9.d4 c6 10.♗d3 ♗d6 11.♘h5 (Yu Yangyi – Torre, Subic Bay 2009) 11...e5!? 12.♗f5!? ♗xf5 13.♘g7+ ♔d7 14.♘xf5 ♔c7 can follow. Black's king walks on over to the queenside, and he should not have any real difficulties.

More often White pursues a completely different strategy — he aims to construct a strong pawn center instead of conceding the center. The latest example of this line: 6.f4 ♘f7 7.d4 c5 8.c3 ♘c6 9.♗e3 cd 10.cd ♘h6 11.♘c3 ♗g4 12.♕d2 e6 13.h3 Burchert – Forchert, Bad Wiessee 2011, and capturing on f6 and following up with g2-g4 is effective in reply to either retreat. It is best for Black to fix the pawn structure with 10...fxe5 11.fe ♗g4 12.♕b3 ♕d7 13.h3 ♗xe2 14.♗xe2 e6.

6. ... f6xg5

7. h2-h4 ...

The necessary undermining, and from the right side. 7.f4 gf 8.♘xf4 g6 9.d4 ♗h6 10.♘d3 0-0 has no bite, and the h-pawn's march is too slow here: 11.h4 ♕d7! 12.h5 ♕f5 13.♗e2 g5.

In Smyslov – Moor (Zuerich 1998) White once again did not get anything substantial out of the opening: 7.d4 c5 8.♘c3 ♘c6 9.♗b5 ♗f5 10.♘ge2 e6 11.0-0 ♗e7 12.♘a4 c4 13.♘g3 0-0 14.♘xf5 ♖xf5 15.♗xc6 bc 16.b3 ♕a5 17.♕e1 ♕b5 18.♕e3 ♖c8 19.♘c3 ♕a6 20.♘e2. At this point White should be the one happy to sign a peace treaty. One should note that 8.h4 gh, relative to the variations

cited below, favors Black because he has ♕d8-a5 and c5xd4.

7. ... g5-g4

The g-pawn should get a move on, too. One recent game played by modern-day masters proves that point: 7...e6 8.hg ♕xg5 9.♘f3 ♕e7 10.♕d2 c5 11.♘f4 ♕f7 12.d4 c4 Dranov – Jugelt, Bonn 2011, and 13.♘g5 ♕g8 14.♗xc4! dc 15.♕e2 g6 16.♕xc4 ♗d7 17.d5 puts a serious dent in Black's defensive shield.

An exchange on h4 is coming up next. Following Bagirov's lead, Let us make note of the fascinating duel Vorotnikov – Kengis, Tallinn 1983: 7...gxh4 8.♘f4 g6 9.♖xh4 ♗g7 10.d4 c5 11.♗d3 ♕a5+ 12.♔f1 cd 13.♖xh7! ♖xh7 14.♗xg6+ ♔d8 15.♗xh7 ♗xe5 16.♕f3 ♘c6 17.♘xd5 ♗e6 18.♕f8+ ♔d7 19.♕xa8 ♕b5+ 20.♗d3 ♕b2 21.♘b6+! ♕xb6 22.♘f3 ♗b8 23.c3! dc 24.♖b1 ♕xb1+ 25.♗xb1 ♔c7. The Lithuanian has boxed in his opponent's queen by taking painstaking efforts, but after 26.♔e1 ♗d5 27.♔d1! all of his efforts would have been in vain. White could have achieved an overwhelming advantage in numerous ways, for example: 12.c3 cd 13.b4 ♕b6 14.♘xd5 ♕d8 15.♖xd4 ♗d7 16.♖h4, renewing the threat of ♖h4xh7. 8...♗f5 9.♘f3 e6 10.♘xh4 ♕g5 11.g3 ♘c6 12.♘xf5 ♕xf5 13.♗h3! ♕xe5+ 14.♔f1 would not have improved Black's play, and the summary is not good for him.

8. ♘e2-f4 ...

The most common move, although it may not be the strongest one. 8.d4, not committing the knight, is more flexible. 8...c5 has been tried, but 9.dc e6 10.♘f4 ♗xc5 11.♕xg4 0-0 12.♘d3 rids Black of any concrete counterplay. He probably should fight for equality by playing 8...♗f5 9.♘g3 e6 followed by ♕d8-d7 and ♘b8-c6-d8.

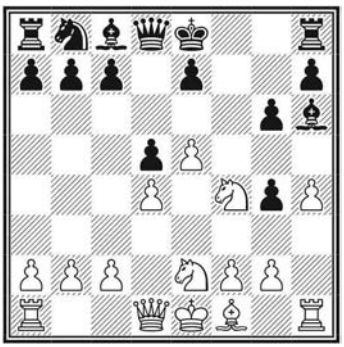
8. ... g7-g6

In Hector – Van der Werf (Berlin 1993) White demonstrated an effective way of combating the bishop: 8...♗f5 9.♘ge2 ♘c6 10.♘g3 ♕d7 11.d4 ♘b4 12.e6!? ♕d6 13.♘xf5 ♕xf4 14.♘e3 g3 15.♕f3 ♕xf3 16.gf gf+ 17.♔xf2. The pawn on e6 slices his opponent's camp into two sections. Black rejected 12...♗xe6 because of 13.c3 ♘c6 14.♗b5, shifting the f4-knight to c5 or e5 via d3.

9. d3-d4 ...

After 9.g3 ♗h6 10.♘ge2 ♘c6 11.d4 ♗f5 12.♗g2 ♘b4 13.0-0 c6 (13...♘xc2?! 14.♖c1 ♘b4? 15.♕a4+ ♘c6 16.♗xd5) 14.a3 ♘a6 15.c4 e6 16.b4 ♘c7 17.b5 0-0 18.bc bc 19.♕a4 ♕e8 20.♖ac1 ♖f7 21.♖c3 ♖d8 22.♖fc1 White attacks on the queenside, supported by his strong center, Hector – Eriksson, Skara 2002. But Black can complicate the game with 9...d4!? (followed by 10.e6 ♕d6 11.♕xg4 ♗h6 12.♘ge2 ♕b4+ 13.♔d1 ♕xb2 14.♖c1 ♕xa2 15.♘xd4 ♖f8), and more often White does not linger with d3-d4.

9. ... ♗f8-h6
10. ♘g1-e2 ...

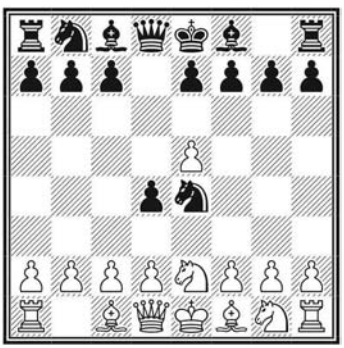


After 10...♘a6?! 11.h5 g5 12.♘d3 0-0 13.c3 b6 14.♘g3 c5 15.♗e2 c4 16.♘c1 ♕d7 (Lerch – Leutwyler, Baden 2012) Black has no real prospects; however, if 10... ♗f5 11.h5 e6 12.hg hg then he is almost on equal footing with White.

Black probably should not count on 4...f6. A critical position arises after 5.d3 ♘g5 6.♗xg5 fg 7.h4 g4 8.d4 — it is not that easy for Black to defend.

Chapter 8. 3.e5 ♘e4 4.♘ce2 d4

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♘b1-c3 d7-d5
3. e4-e5 ♘f6-e4
4. ♘c3-e2 d5-d4



Taking over space, before White has the chance to do so. The pawn comes under attack once it infiltrates enemy lines.

5. c2-c3 ...

5.d3 will be seen in Game 14. 5.♘f3 generally transposes back to one of the two main lines depending on what pawns are pushed. If 5... ♗g4, then 6.♘exd4 ♕xd4 7.♘xd4 ♗xd1 8.f3 ♗xc2 9.♘xc2 ♘c5 10.b4 ♘e6 11.♗c4, hoping to pick up the bishop pair, is not bad.

5. ... ♘b8-c6

Caution! Do not even think about backing up the pawn with 5...c5?? because after 6.d3 the knight does not have any flight squares! It seems as though there is no need to warn Black about this, but actually a few players have fallen into that simple trap!

5...dxc3 does not jive with 4... d4. White has a free hand: 6.bc ♘c5 7.d4 ♘e6 8.h4 b6 9.♘f3 ♗b7 10.♘g5 ♘xg5 11.hg e6?! (11...♗e4

covers g6, but then 12.e6! is quite promising) 12.g6! ♕e7 13.♘f4 ♗e4 14.♗d3 ♗xd3 15.♕xd3 h6 16.♖h3 ♘d7 17.gf+ ♔xf7 18.♘g6, and Black had to capitulate in Romero – Wall, Dublin 2012. Or 7...♘ca6 8.♘f4 e6 9.♘h5! c5 10.♕g4 f5 11.♘xg7+ ♔d7 12.♕g3 ♖g8 13.♗b5+ ♘c6 14.d5! ♖xg7 15.dc+ bc 16.♕f3, and White attacks without giving back the won material.

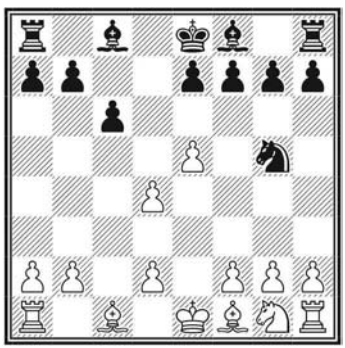
Caution! Do not be greedy! After 6.♕a4+?! ♘d7 7.♕xe4?? ♘c5 White cannot protect b2 and f2 simultaneously. If 7.d4?! cb 8.♗xb2 c6 9.♕c2 ♕a5+ 10.♘c3 ♘xc3 11.♗xc3 ♕d5 12.♘e2 ♘b6 13.♘f4 ♕d8 14.♗d3 e6 15.h4 g6 (Khaetsky – V.Sergeev, Teplice 2011) then there is not enough compensation for the pawn. After the best 7.♘xc3 ♘ec5 8.♕d1 c6 9.d4 ♘e6 10.d5 cd 11.♕xd5 ♕c7 12.f4 ♘b6 13.♕f3 g5! both sides have roughly even chances.

6. ♘e2xd4 ...

6.♘f3 requires a precise reply from Black. After 6...♗g4?! 7.♘exd4 ♘xe5 8.♕e2 ♕d5 9.♕b5+ ♕xb5 10.♗xb5+ ♘d7 11.♘e5 ♘ef6 12.f3 a6 13.♘xg4 ab 14.♘xb5 ♔d8 15.♘xf6 ef Black had to fight for a draw in Folk – De Jong, Plzen 2000, while if 13.♘xf7! ♔xf7 14.♗c4+ ♔g6 15.fg and ♘d4-e6 then Black's army looks terribly clumsy. However, by inserting ♘g1-f3 and ♘b8-c6 the aforementioned exchange may be justified: 6...dxc3 7.bc ♗g4 8.d4 e6 9.h3 ♗f5 10.g4 ♗g6 11.♗g2 ♗e7 12.h4 h6 Lie – Gausel, Kristiansund 2001. The centralized knight is as strong as an ox, and Black's position is just as good.

The alternative capture, 6.cd, was tested in Game 15, an exciting encounter.

6. ... ♘c6xd4
7. ♕d1-a4+ c7-c6
8. ♕a4xd4 ♕d8xd4
9. c3xd4 ♘e4-g5



There is no dynamic compensation for the pawn after an exchange of queens, and there will not be any. But White's pawn structure is mangled, so Black clearly has some lasting static compensation.

10. ♗f1-c4 ...

Iruzubieta's carefully constructed blockade nullified Ochoa's advantage (Spain 1994): 10.d3 ♘e6 11.♗e3 ♘c7 12.♘e2 ♗e6 13.♘f4 ♗d5 14.♗e2 e6 15.0-0 ♗e7 16.♘xd5 ♘xd5 17.♗f3 0-0-0 18.a3 ♖d7 19.♖ac1 a6 20.♖c4 ♗d8

21.♗xd5 ♖xd5 22.♖c5 ♖d7 with a draw shortly thereafter. White should activate his light-squared bishop instead, following the main line or Hector's plan: 10.♗d3 ♘e6 11.♘e2 g6 12.♗e4 ♘c7 13.b3 ♗h6 14.h4 ♗e6 15.h5 ♖d8 16.♗b2 g5 17.f3 g4 Hector – Anagnostou, Komotini 1992. Nevertheless, Black is still hanging in there.

10. ... ♗c8-f5

After 10...b5?! 11.♗b3 ♗e6 12.d3 ♗xb3 13.ab ♘e6 14.♘f3 ♘c7 15.♔e2 e6 16.♗e3 ♗e7 17.♘d2 ♔d7 18.♘e4 ♘d5 19.♗d2 ♔c8 20.h4 f5 21.ef gf 22.♔f3 h5 23.♖he1 Jobava gradually outplayed Nalbandian (Batumi 2003). 14.♘e2 ♘c7 15.♗d2, looking to double rooks along the a-file, is even better. It seems as though Black needs to activate his pieces more and push his pawns less.

11. ♘g1-e2 ...

V.Bagirov equalized against Sorensen (Berlin 1992) by typical regrouping his forces in typical fashion: 11...♘e6 12.d3 ♘c7 13.♘g3 ♗e6 14.♗e3 ♗d5 15.♘e4 e6 (15...f5 seems weaker because of 16.♗xd5! ♘xd5 17.♘c5) 16.0-0 0-0-0 17.♖ac1 ♗e7 18.♗g5 ♗xg5 19.♘xg5 ♖d7 20.♗xd5 ♘xd5 21.♘e4 ♔b8 22.♘d6 ♘b6 23.f4 f5. Zinchenko against Ringoir (Metz 2010) reached the same goal with some more sophisticated play: 11... h5 12.f4 ♘e6 13.d5 cd 14.♗xd5 0-0-0 15.♗xe6+ ♗xe6 16.d4 ♗d5 17.♔f2 ♖h6! 18.♗e3 ♖b6 19.b3 e6 20.♖hc1+ ♖c6 21.♘c3 ♗a3 22.♘xd5 ♖xd5 23.♖xc6+ bc, and Black is on the right path towards a draw.

Game 14

B.Lepelletier – E.Rozentalis

France 2007

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**♘b1-c3**	**d7-d5**
3.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-e4**
4.	**♘c3-e2**	**d5-d4**
5.	**d2-d3**	**♘e4-c5**



6. f2-f4 ...

White can fight for an advantage with 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.b4!?. There is 7...♘xb4 (7...♘e6 8.b5 ♘b8 9.c3!? dc 10.d4) 8.♘exd4 e6 9.c3 ♘d5 10.c4 ♘b4 11.a3 ♘bxd3+ 12.♗xd3 ♘xd3+ 13.♕xd3 c5 14.♗g5 ♕a5+ 15.♗d2 ♕d8 (Ronnqvist– Skliarov, Finland 2010) 16.0-0 cd 17.♗b4 ♗xb4 18.ab, and White clearly has a better setup. So, if 5.d3 ♘c5 6.♘f3 then 6...♘e6 7.g3 c5 8.♗g2 ♘c6 is more solid. White in his turn should

think about move order 5.♘f3 ♘c6 6.d3 ♘c5 7.b4.

6. ... ♘b8-c6
7. ♘g1-f3 ♗c8-g4

If 7...g6 8.h3 ♗g7 then the same exchange, 9.b4!? ♘xb4 10.♘exd4, which favors White, will occur, so it is more desirable to develop the bishop.

8. ♘e2-g3 h7-h5

This is a pretty typical reply to the knight pivoting on g3. It is interesting to take a look at how in 2001 Magnus Carlsen, a young and relatively green player outplayed Johansen (Oslo 2001): 8...e6 9.♗e2 ♗e7 10.0-0 h5 (Black inserted this pawn push here, too) 11.h3 h4 12.♘h1 ♗f5 13.♘f2 ♕d7 14.c4 f6 15.b3 a5 16.a3 a4 17.b4 ♘b3 18.♖b1 ♘xc1?! 19.♖xc1 fe?! 20.b5 ♘a5 21.♘xe5. Black should not have given Magnus e5 on a silver platter – 19...♗g6 would have been acceptable.

9. h2-h3 ♗g4xf3
10. ♕d1xf3 ♘c6-b4
11. ♔e1-d1 ...

Lepelletier foregoes castling, hoping to keep the position closed. In any case, it is not too easy to protect c2 — if 11.♕e2, then 11... ♕d7!?, planning ♕d7-a4.

11. ... h5-h4
12. ♘g3-e4 e7-e6
13. ♗f1-e2 ♘b4-d5

Perhaps Black should have prevented 14.f5!?, which would have given White the initiative. 13...♕e7 (14.f5 ef 15.♕xf5 ♘xe4 16.♕xe4 ♕c5, and White cannot hold c2) would have accomplished that.

14. ♗c1-d2 ♕d8-d7
15. ♔d1-e1 0-0-0
16. ♔e1-f2 f7-f6
17. ♖h1-f1 ♗f8-e7
18. ♔f2-g1 ♖d8-f8

The French master spent four moves on castling his king by hand, and got away with it. Moreover, Rozentalis has failed to account for 19.f5!? (19...fxe5?! 20.♘xc5 ♗xc5 21.fe ♕xe6? 22.♕xf8+! ♖xf8 23.♗g4, winning the exchange and the game). White made an unnecessary exchange, so now he has to fight for equality once again.

19. e5xf6 g7xf6
20. f4-f5 e6-e5
21. ♘e4xc5 ♗e7xc5
22. ♕f3-e4 ♖f8-g8
23. ♗e2-f3 c7-c6
24. a2-a3 ♗c5-f8
25. b2-b4 ♗f8-h6
26. ♗d2xh6 ♖h8xh6
27. b4-b5 ♔c8-c7
28. b5xc6 b7xc6
29. ♖a1-b1 ♘d5-c3
30. ♕e4-e1 ...

Now White's clever master plan makes itself known: after 30...♘xb1 31.♕a5+ ♔d6 32.♕b4+ c5 33.♕b3 ♖hh8 34.♕d5+ ♔e7 35.♕xc5+ ♕d6 36.♕xa7+ the game ends in perpetual check.

30. ... ♖g8-b8
31. ♖b1-b4 ♖h6-h8
32. ♖b4-c4 ♖b8-b6
33. a3-a4 ♕d7-d6
34. ♔g1-h1?! ...

One can only assume that Lepelletier, in time pressure, decided to straighten out his pawn chain on the kingside, but his timing was off. White should have continued challenging the b-file with 34.a5 and then tested Black's weakness on c5 with ♕e1-a1-a3.

34.	**...**	**c6-c5**
35.	**g2-g4?!**	**♖b6-b1**
36.	**♕e1-f2**	**♖b1xf1+**
37.	**♕f2xf1**	**♖h8-b8**
38.	**♕f1-f2**	**♖b8-b1+**
39.	**♔h1-g2**	**♘c3-d5**
40.	**♗f3-e4**	**♘d5-e3+**
41.	**♔g2-h2**	**♘e3xc4**
42.	**d3xc4**	**d4-d3**

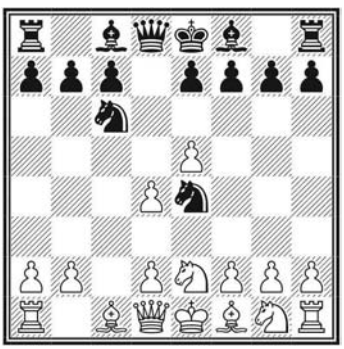
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Game 15

L.-D. Nisipeanu – V.Bagirov

Cuxhaven 1994

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**♘b1-c3**	**d7-d5**
3.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-e4**
4.	**♘c3-e2**	**d5-d4**
5.	**c2-c3**	**♘b8-c6**
6.	**c3xd4**	**...**



This appears to take the c5-square away from the knight, but Black has an acceptable tactical variation: 6...e6 7.h4 ♘b4 8.d3 ♘c5! 9.♘f4 ♕xd4 10.♘f3 ♕d7. 7.a3, keeping the bishop or knight off of b4 (7.d3?? ♗b4+), is stronger. Bagirov removes his knight from the center without hesitation.

6.	**...**	**♘e4-g5**
7.	**f2-f4**	**...**

The game is essentially over after 7.♕a4!? ♗f5 8.♕b5 ♘e6 9.♕xb7 ♗e4 10.♘c3 ♖b8 11.♕a6 ♘b4 12.♕a4+? ♗c6 13.♗b5? ♖xb5! 14.♘xb5 ♘xd4 15.♔d1 e6 Shabtai – Nataf, Paris 1993. There is one unclear variation — 12.♕c4 ♘c2+ 13.♔d1 ♘b4 14.♕e2, but White should not have developed his queen just to pick up the miserable b7-pawn. 8.d3 h6 (8...♘e6?! 9.g4! ♗xg4 10.♗g2) 9.♕c4 e6 10.a3 is preferable, and the extra pawn will come in handy once he consolidates his position.

7.	**...**	**♘g5-e6**
8.	**♘g1-f3**	**♘e6xd4**
9.	**♘e2xd4**	**♘c6xd4**
10.	**♕d1-a4+**	**♘d4-c6**
11.	**♗f1-b5**	**...**

If 11.d4 then it makes perfect sense to repeat moves with 11...a6 12.♗c4 ♖b8 13.♕b3 e6 14.0-0 ♘a5 15.♕a4+ ♘c6. If 12.♗b5 ♗d7 13.e6 fe 14.♗e2 then the f8-bishop comes out to the flank, and there may not be enough compensation for the pawn.

11.	**...**	**♗c8-d7**

Gausel successfully solved his opening problems against Westerinen (Gausdal 1996) by playing 11...♕d5!? 12.♗c4 ♕e4+ 13.♔f2 e6 14.d4 ♗d7 15.♖e1 ♕g6 16.♕d1 ♘b4 17.a3 ♕c2+ 18.♕e2 ♕xe2+ 19.♖xe2 ♘d5 20.f5 ♘b6 21.♗a2 ♗e7. 12.♗xc6+ bc 13.d4, recommended by Houdini, underestimates the power of Black's bishop pair.

12. e5-e6! ♗d7xe6

12...fxe6 would be met by 13.♕e4, which would have been impossible in the previous variation with 11.d4. Eventually, White's initiative may produce a mating attack: 13...g6 14.♘g5 e5?! 15.♕d5 ♕c8 (Watson – Neil, Norwich 1994) 16.♕f7+ ♔d8 17.fe ♘xe5?? 18.♘e6+ ♗xe6 19.♕e8#.

13. ♘f3-e5 ♗e6-d7
14. ♘e5xc6 b7xc6
15. ♗b5xc6 e7-e6
16. 0-0 ...

Westerinen against Tisdall (Gausdal 1996) wasted no time and flung his pawn at his opponent's king: 16.f5 ♕e7 17.♕e4 ♖d8 18.fe ♕xe6 19.♕xe6+ fe 20.♗xd7+ ♖xd7 21.♔e2 ♗d6 22.d3 ♗e5 23.♗e3 0-0 24.♖ab1 a5. The players eventually agreed to a truce. Young Sasha Kosteniuk won a pawn and achieved an overwhelming position in her game against L.Popov (Wijk aan Zee 1999): 16.b3 ♗e7?! 17.♗b2 ♗f6 18.♗xf6 gf 19.♖c1 ♖c8 20.♗xd7+ ♕xd7 21.♕xa7 0-0 22.♕e3 ♖fd8 23.♕g3+ ♔f8 24.♕c3. Black should have given up the pawn by opting for 16...♖b8!? 17.♗xd7+ ♕xd7 18.♕xa7 ♖d8 19.0-0 ♕c6 20.♔h1 ♗c5 21.♕a5 ♗d4 22.♖b1 0-0, and then he definitely would have had tangible compensation.

16. ... ♗f8-e7
17. d2-d4 ♖a8-b8
18. f4-f5 e6xf5
19. ♖f1xf5 f7-f6?

Only now does Nisipeanu take the reins. We attribute Black's unwillingness to repeat moves (19... 0-0! 20.♗xd7 ♖b4 21.♕c6 ♖b6) to his excessive optimism.

20. ♖f5-d5 ♗e7-d6
21. ♗c1-f4 ♗d7xc6
22. ♕a4xc6+ ♕d8-d7
23. ♖a1-e1+ ♔e8-d8
24. ♕c6-a6! ...

The Romanian player launches an attack on the queenside to finish it off on the kingside. He is putting on quite the show, and all of his moves line up with Houdini's recommendations!

24. ... ♖h8-e8
25. ♖e1-c1 ♖e8-e6

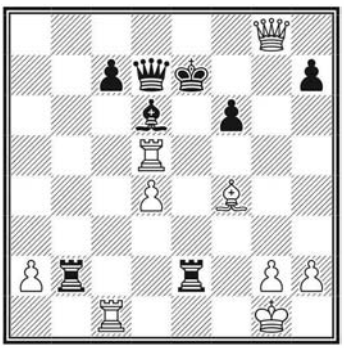
If 25...♕e6?! then 26.♖xd6+ cd 27.♕a5+ ♖b6 28.♕xa7 ♖c6 29.♕a5+ ♔d7 30.♕b5 wins easily (Stoica).

26. ♕a6xa7 ♖b8xb2
27. ♕a7-a8+ ♔d8-e7
28. ♕a8-g8 ♖e6-e2?

Nevertheless, if Black had played 28...♕c6! then he could have drawn out the game for quite some time. After 29.♗xd6+ cd 30.♕xg7+

♔e8 31.♕g8+ ♔e7 32.♕xh7+ ♔f8 33.♕h6+ ♔e8 34.h4 ♖xg2+ 35.♔xg2 ♕xd5+ 36.♔g3 ♕f5 a queen endgame (with White being a pawn up) was looming. It seems as though White should have gone for 29.♕xg7+ ♔e8 30.♖e5! ♗xe5 31.de ♖xe5 32.♕g3 ♕d5 33.♗xe5 fe 34.♔h1, playing against Black's king with the same number of pawns for both sides.

29. ♕g8xg7+ ♔e7-e8
30. ♕g7-g8+ ♔e8-e7



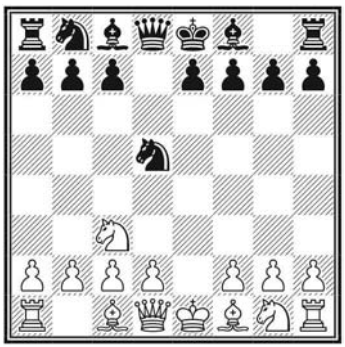
31. ♖d5-g5! ♗d6xf4
32. ♖g5-g7+ ♔e7-d6
33. ♖g7xd7+ ♔d6xd7
34. ♕g8-g4+
1-0

It looks as though the disadvantages of having a pawn on d4 outweigh the benefits. Exchanging it off generally only fuels White's initiative. If Black sheds the pawn he has some drawing chances, depending on the position. One should acknowledge 3...♘e4 to be not as solid as 3...♘d7 or 3...d4.

Part 3. The Scandinavian System with 3.ed ♘d5

Chapter 9. Various 4th moves

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♘b1-c3 d7-d5
3. e4xd5 ♘f6xd5



At this point we shall consider various continuations — 4.♘f3 is to be covered in Chapter 10, 4.d4 in Chapter 11, and 4.♗c4 in Chapters 12-16.

4. ♘c3xd5?! ...

It is incredible how often players make this hasty exchange — White opts for ♘c3xd5 much less often than 4.♗c4, but it is still much more popular than all the other moves put together! It makes sense to lure the queen into the center only if White would be able to pursue it. Now the queen is safe and pins down opponent's forces tangibly.

Let us consider three other options for White.

Hug and Korchnoi fought a heated and complex battle with roughly equal chances (Switzerland 1986): 4.g3 g6 5.♗g2 c6 6.♘f3 ♗g7 7.0-0 0-0 8.♖e1 ♗g4 9.h3 ♗xf3 10.♕xf3 e6 11.♘e4 ♘a6 12.d4!? h6 (12...♗xd4 involves some risk due to 13.♗h6 ♗g7 14.♗xg7 ♔xg7 15.c4 and ♕f3-c3) 13.c3 ♖e8 14.♗f1 e5 15.de ♖xe5 16.♖d1 ♕e7 17.♘d2 ♘c5 18.♘c4 ♖e6 19.♘e3 ♘b6. But, theoretically speaking, 4...♘xc3 5.bc ♕d5 is more precise, and it equalizes immediately. For instance, 6.♕f3 (or 6.♘f3 ♕e4+7. ♗e2 ♗h3 8.d4 e6 9.♕d3 ♕xd3 10.cd ♘d7) 6...♕xf3 7.♘xf3 b6 8.♗g2 ♗b7 9.0-0 ♘d7 10.♖e1 e6 11.♗b2 ♗e7 12.c4 ♗f6 13.♗xf6 ♘xf6 14.♘e5 ♗xg2 15.♔xg2 ♘d7 16.d3 f6 17.♘xd7 ♔xd7 with a long, dry rook endgame, Eid – Rausis, Elista 1998.

4.♘ge2 keeps Black from immediate equalizing. But overall

he is rather satisfied with the resulting position. For instance, 4...e5 5.♘xd5 ♕xd5 6.♘c3 (the knight has done his time) 6...♕e6 (6...♕c5!?) 7.b3 ♘c6 8.♗b2 ♗d7 9.♗c4 ♕g6 10.0-0 0-0-0, or 4...♘c6 5.d4 ♗f5 6.♘g3 ♗g6 7.♗b5 ♘xc3 8.♗xc6+ bc 9.bc e6 10.0-0 ♕d5.

4.♕f3 c6 5.♗c4 and 4...e6 5.♗c4 overlap with the continuations following 4.♗c4. 4...♘f6, aiming to develop the bishop to g4 with tempo, looks pretty good. Naturally, an exchange on c3 is worth considering. 4...♘xc3 forces Alekhine Defense players to answer one pivotal question — does White's immediate initiative outweigh Black's superior structure? 5.♕xc3 can be met by 5...♘c6 6.♘f3 ♕d5!? 7.♗c4 ♕e4+ 8.♗e2 e5 9.d3 ♕a4, and Black finishes his development easily.

4. ... ♕d8xd5

5. ♘g1-f3 ...

If White intends d2-d4 then there is no sense in holding the knight back. For instance, in the 5.d4 ♘c6 6.♗e3 e5!? 7.de ♕xe5 8.c3 ♗c5 9.♘f3 ♕e7 variation he would have three pawn islands versus Black's two.

If White feels the need to disturb Black's centralized queen then 5.c4?! is out of the question because of 5...♕e4+ 6.♕e2 ♕xe2+ 7.♗xe2 ♘c6 8.♘f3 ♗f5. If 5.♕f3 then an exchange of queens is acceptable: 5...c6 6.♕xd5 cd 7.d4 ♘c6 8.♘f3 ♗f5 9.c3 a6 10.♗f4 h6 11.♘e5 g5 12.♘xc6 bc 13.♗e3 e6 14.h4 g4 15.h5 ♗e7 16.b4 a5 17.b5 cb 18.♗xb5+ ♔f8 19.♔d2 ♔g7 20.♗d3 ♗xd3 21.♔xd3 ♖hc8 22.f3 draw, Samolins – Luther, Pardubice 2011. It is more pragmatic for Black to take a different approach. He should strive to avoid the drawish lines and fight for an advantage. Mikkelsen – Antoniewski (Copenhagen 2006) may serve as a guideline: 5...♕c5 6.c3 e5 7.♗d3 ♘d7 8.♘e2 g6 9.a4 a5 10.0-0 ♗e7 11.♗b5 0-0 12.d4 (12.b3!?) 12...exd4 13.cd ♕b6 14.♗h6 ♖d8 15.♖fe1 ♘f6 16.♘c3 ♗g4 17.♕g3 ♗e6 18.♗f4 ♗d6, playing against White's isolated pawn.

5. ... ♗c8-g4

5...♗f5 does not look too shabby, either. Carmaciu – M.Grunberg (Romania 1999) makes one think the colors had been flipped in the beginning of the game: 6.♗e2 ♘c6 7.0-0 0-0-0 8.d3 e5 9.♘g5 ♘d4 10.♗f3 ♘xf3+ 11.♕xf3 ♕xf3 12.♘xf3 f6 13.♗e3 ♖d5 14.♘d2 ♗c5 15.♗xc5 ♖xc5 16.♖ac1 ♖d8 17.f3 a5 18.♖fd1 a4 19.♔f2 ♖d4 with a space advantage.

Perhaps 5...e5 is not as strong because of 6.d4!. After 6...e4 7.♘e5 ♗e6 8.♗c4 ♕d6 9.0-0 ♗xc4 10.♘xc4 ♕d5 11.♘e3 ♕e6 12.♖e1 Black probably is the one in trouble. If 6...♗g4 7.♗e2 e4 8.♘d2 ♗xe2 9.♕xe2 ♕xd4? then the e4-pawn falls, but only after the b7-pawn — 10.♕b5+ ♘d7 11.♕xb7

♖b8 12.♕xe4+ ♕xe4 13.♘xe4. It seems as though Black should aim to maintain a balanced position like Balashov did against Musalov (Taganrog 2011): 6...♘c6 7.♗e3 ed 8.♘xd4 a6 9.♘xc6 ♕xc6 10.♕d4 ♗e7 11.0-0-0 ♗f6 12.♕b4 ♗e6 13.♗d3 a5 14.♕e4 ♕xe4 15.♗xe4 0-0 16.♗d5 ♖fe8 17.♗xe6 ♖xe6 18.♖d7 ♗e5 19.♖hd1 ♗d6 20.♗b6 ♗f4+ 21.♗e3 ♗d6 22.♗b6 ♗f4+ with a draw by repetition. But after an exchange on d5 Black can contend for more.

6. ♗f1-e2 ♘b8-c6

6..e6 is too modest. After 7.d4 ♘c6 8.h3 ♗h5 9.0-0 0-0-0 10.♗e3 ♗e7 11.c4 ♕a5 12.a3 ♗xf3 13.♗xf3 ♗f6? 14.b4 ♕f5? 15.♗xc6 bc 16.♕a4 Sahl – Vaganian, Saint John 1988, king's palace crumbling could cost Black a pretty penny. He should have gone for a sharp variation 13...♕a6 14.b4 ♘xd4 15.♗xd4 ♕xc4 16.♗xb7+ ♔xb7 17.♕f3+ ♕d5 18.♕xf7 ♖d7 19.♗xg7 ♖hd8 20.♖ad1 ♕xd1+ 21.♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 22.♔h2 ♖8d7, fighting for a draw.

7. d2-d4 ...

This is the perfect time to claim more territory. After 7.0-0 e5 8.d3 0-0-0 9.♗e3 f5 10.h3 ♗h5 White curls up on the back three ranks, waiting for his opponent's attack to come crashing through (or not). In the 8.♘xe5?! ♗xe2 9.♕xe2 ♘xe5 10.f4 ♗c5+ 11.♔h1 0-0 12.♕xe5 ♕c4 variation Black wins back the pawn and gets a favorable position.

7. ... 0-0-0

Castling short is much more rare. In this case White can chase the black queen around the board and attempts to break through in the center: 7...e6 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.c4 ♕a5 10.♗d2 ♕f5 11.♗c3 0-0 12.♕b3 ♖ab8 13.d5 ed 14.cd ♗xf3 15.♗xf3 ♘e5 16.♗xe5 ♕xe5 17.♖fe1 ♕f6 18.♖e4. Black has to fight for equality.

8. c2-c3 ...

Caution! After 8.♗e3? e5! the knot in the center comes undone, often to Black's benefit. One must look at the concrete follow-ups.

1) 9.c3 ed 10.cd ♗b4+ 11.♔f1, and losing castling rights hits White hard;

2) 9.0-0 ed 10.♘xd4 ♗xe2 11.♘xe2, and 11...♕b5!? is the most convincing reply;

3) 9.c4 ♕a5+ 10.♗d2 ♗b4 11.d5 e4! with a spicy follow-up: 12.♗xb4 ♕xb4+ 13.♘d2 ♗xe2 14.♔xe2 ♖xd5! 15.cd ♕b5+, and White can only avoid being mated by giving up his queen;

4) 9.♘xe5 ♗xe2 10.♕xe2 ♘xe5 11.de ♕xg2 12.♖f1 ♗e7 (or something else) – stranded in the center, the white king feels uneasy;

5) 9.de ♗xf3 10.gf ♕a5+ 11.♗d2 ♕xe5 12.c3 ♗c5 13.0-0 ♖he8 14.♗c4 ♕f5 15.b4 ♘e5 16.♗e2 ♗b6 17.f4 ♕g6+ 18.♔h1 ♕c6+ 19.♔g1 ♖e6 20.♗h5 ♖xd2! 21.b5 ♖g6+ 22.♗g4 ♘xg4. In the source game Reti routed Ilyin-Zhenevsky (Moscow 1925): 1.e4 ♘f6 2.e5 ♘d5

3.♘f3 d6 4.d4 ♗g4 5.♗e2 ♘c6 6.ed ♕xd6 7.♘c3?! 0-0-0 8.♘xd5 ♕xd5 9.♗e3? e5 – naturally, Black plays e5 a move later. 10.♗xf3 (instead of 10.gf) 10...♕a5+ 11.♗d2 ♕xe5+ 12.♕e2 ♕xb2 13.0-0 ♘d4 14.♗g4+ ♔b8 15.♕c4 ♕xc2 16.♗c3 ♗a3 is a bit better, and Black has finished his development. White has dubious compensation for the pawn.

If 8.c4 then Black lashes out with a blow in the center, although it is not as effective this time: 8...♕e4 9.♗e3 e5! 10.d5 ♗xf3 11.gf ♕h4. As has been the case in these lines, the white king feels a bit uneasy.

8. ... e7-e5

9. 0-0 ...

After 9.de?! ♕e4 we have the makes of a chess miniature. For instance, 10.♘d4?? ♘xd4 11.cd ♖xd4 12.♗d2 ♗b4 13.f3 ♗xd2+ Bakkes – Coenen, Guernsey 2011. Or there is the computer-generated variation, which is not so trite: 10.♘d2 ♗xe2 11.♕xe2 ♕xg2 12.♖f1 ♘xe5!! 13.♕xe5 ♗a3!! 14.♕f5+ ♔b8 15.♘b3 ♗xb2! (explains 13...♗a3!!).

9. ... e5xd4

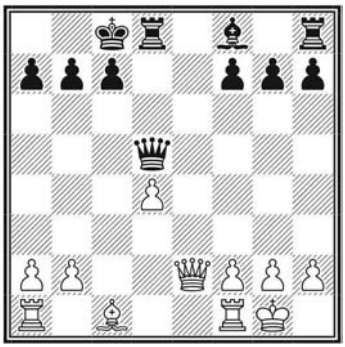
10. ♘f3xd4 ...

Alburt and Vasiukov (Kharkov 1967) kept the position roughly balanced with 10.cd ♗d6 11.♗e3 ♔b8 12.h3 ♗d7 13.♕c2 f6 14.a3 ♖de8 15.♖fd1 ♘e7. Perhaps 11... f5 would have been more decisive. White parries his opponent's direct threats with 12.♕c1 ♖he8 13.♗d1, but he does not create any of his own.

10. ... ♗g4xe2

11. ♕d1xe2 ♘c6xd4

12. c3xd4 ...



Two rather strong female players each made two more moves in this position: 12...♕xd4? 13.♗g5 ♕d3?? 14.♖ad1 Sudakova – Melamed, St. Petersburg 1998. If Black leaves the pawn alone he can drum up an attack on White's king — 12...♗d6 13.♗e3 ♖de8 14.♕d2 ♖e4 15.♖ac1 ♖he8 16.a3 f5 17.g3 g5! (Zallio – Matsuura, Brazil 2012) 18.♗xg5 f4! 19.♗h4 ♖g8 20.♖fe1 fg 21.♗xg3 Reg4, planning to get the h-pawn rolling.

Exchanging knights is not just a sub-par move; it is a bad one. Black has excellent prospects in the center, which he can convert into a kingside attack. If White opts for 4.g3, 4.♘ge2 or 4.♕f3 then he keeps the position balanced, at the very least.

Chapter 10. 4.♘f3

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♘b1-c3 d7-d5
3. e4xd5 ♘f6xd5
4. ♘g1-f3 ...



This typical developing move gives Black many options. He can choose from multiple good setups. Naturally, this line intersects with the 4.d4 and 4.♗c4 continuations from the upcoming chapters.

4. ... ♗c8-g4

If 4...♗f5 5.d4 ♘b4 then White has to waste a tempo on protecting c2 – 6.♗b5+ c6 7.♗a4 e6 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♗f4 0-0 10.♖e1 h6 11.a3 ♘d5 12.♘xd5 cd. Black should meet 5.♗c4 with 5...♘b6 6.♗b3 e6 (possibly leading to equality), but not 5...e6?! 6.♗xd5! ed 7.♕e2+ ♗e7 8.♕e5! ♗xc2 9.♘xd5 ♔f8 10.♕xc7, winning a pawn.

The one drawback of 4...♘c6 is that White can pin the knight (♗f1-b5) and ruin Black's pawn structure. However, in the 5.♗b5 ♘xc3 6.bc ♕d5 7.♕e2 ♗g4 8.c4 ♕h5 9.♗b2 e6 10.♕e4 ♗xf3 11.gf ♕c5 variation White's pawn cluster has been damaged, but Black probably has not benefitted from that. After 5.d4 ♗g4 6.♗e2 e6 7.0-0 ♘f6 8.h3 ♗h5 9.♗b5 ♗d6 10.d5!? ♘xd5 11.♘xd5 ed 12.♖e1+ ♔f8 or 10.♗g5 0-0 11.♗xc6 bc 12.♘e4 ♗e7 13.♗xf6 gf 14.♘g3 ♗xf3 15.♕xf3 (R.Mamedov – Li Wenliang, Al Ain 2012) 15...♕xd4 16.♖ae1 ♕c5 17.♘e4 ♕e5 White's initiative makes up for the sacrificed pawn.

An exchange on c3, not overlapping with Chapter 11, is analyzed in Game 16.

5. ♗f1-e2 ...

Compared to the 4...♗f5 line above, here 5.♗c4 e6 6.♗xd5 ed 7.♕e2+ ♗e7 and then the queen's thrust to e5 has no bite. If 8.♕b5+ ♘d7 9.♕xd5 c6 10.♕e4 ♘f6 11.♕d4 (Shaw – Kreusch, Vienna 2009) 11...♗xf3 12.♕xd8+ ♖xd8 13.gf ♘d5 14.d3 ♘xc3 15.bc 0-0 then Black has great drawing chances. If Black does not want to give up a pawn then he can play 5... c6, transposing back to 4.♗c4 c6.

5. ... e7-e6

In the Alekhine Defense Black should always be checking for ♘d5-f4, which is quite promising in the majority of cases. Here 5... ♘f4!? has practically never been

investigated before; 6.h3 ♘xe2 7.hg ♘xc3 8.bc leads to a complicated position favoring White.

6. d2-d4 ...

It is hard to get around without playing this move, but White should be aware of an exchange on c3, too. After 6...♘xc3 7.bc ♘d7 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♖b1 ♖b8 10.h3 ♗h5 11.♖e1 0-0 12.♗f4 ♗d6 13.♘e5 ♘xe5 14.♗xe5 ♗g6 15.♗d3 b6 16.♕f3 ♗xe5 17.♖xe5 ♕d6 Kranzl – Kengis, Vienna 1994, neither side has gained any edge yet, but White's fractured pawn structure may lure the black queen to the queenside.

6. ... ♗f8-e7
7. 0-0 0-0
8. ♘c3-e4 ...



The knight has avoided exchanging, and now we transpose into the 1.e4 d5 2.ed ♘f6 3.d4 ♘xd5 4.♘f3 ♗g4 5.♗e2 e6 6.0-0 ♗e7 7.♘bd2 0-0 8.♘e4 variation. That is hardly a tabiya in the Scandinavian Defense, so we shall leave analysis of this line to the real experts on the Scandinavian.

8. ... ♘b8-c6

In Mamedov – Kovalenko, Moscow 2011, Black focused on maneuvering on the back three ranks: 8...c6 9.h3 ♗f5 10.♘g3 ♗g6 11.♘e5 ♘d7 12.♘xg6 hg 13.c4 ♘5f6 14.♗f4 ♖e8 15.♗f3 ♕b6 16.c5 ♕d8 17.♕b3 ♕c8 18.♖fe1 ♗d8 19.♗g5 ♗c7, and got a relatively passive position. The c-pawn must be aggressive: 8...♘d7 9.♘g3 c5 or 9.c4 ♘5f6 10.♘g3 c5 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♗xf3 cd 13.♕xd4 ♕c7 14.b3 ♗c5 15.♕h4 ♘e5, and the threat of 16...♘g6 deprives White of the bishop pair, Pinkas – Giesen, Salzburg 2001.

9. ♘e4-g3 ...

If 9.c3 ♗f5 then the knight will have to vacate the center sooner or later. Megaranto, playing against Shen Siyuan (Kuala Lumpur 2008), decided to kick the knight back right away: 10.♘g3 ♗g6 11.♗d3 ♗f6 12.♖e1 ♖e8 13.♗xg6 hg 14.♘e5 ♗xe5 15.de ♘b6 16.♕g4 ♕d5 17.♗f4 ♖ad8 18.b3 ♘d7. The weak e5-pawn keeps White's ambitious plans in check.

9. ... ♗e7-d6

In his 1923 duel versus Yates, Bogoljubow started exchanging left and right: 9...♘f6 10.c3 ♘h5 11.♘xh5 ♗xh5 12.♗f4 ♗d6 13.♗g3 ♗xg3 14.hg ♕d6 15.♖e1 ♖fd8 16.♘d2 ♗g6 17.♗f3 ♖ab8 18.♘c4 ♕d7 19.♕e2 ♘e7 20.♘e5 ♕d6 21.♖ad1 b5 22.a3 a5 23.g4 c6. Black could not fully equalize in the resulting boring endgame.

10. h2-h3 ...

Black in Sandipan – Sikora Lerch, Pardubice 2005, decently kept the position complicated: 10...♗xg3 11.hg ♗d6 12.g3 ♗e7 13.c4 ♘f6 14.g5 ♘e4 15.d5 ed 16.cd ♘b4 17.♗c4 ♘xg5 18.♘xg5 ♗xg5 19.♗xg5 ♕xg5 20.♕b3 a5 21.a3, and all he had to do now was to find 21...b5!. However, 13.g5! would have given White better chances. Black could have equalized with a precise order of exchanges: 10...♗xf3 11.♗xf3 ♗xg3 12.fg ♕d6.

Game 16

I.Nepomniachtchi – M.Carlsen

World Blitz Championship, Moscow 2010

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♘b1-c3 d7-d5
3. e4xd5 ♘f6xd5
4. ♘g1-f3 ♘d5xc3
5. b2xc3 ...

It is odd, but some players go for a capture away from the center: 5.dc?! ♕xd1+ 6.♔xd1. Unlike the 2.e5 ♘d5 3.♘c3 ♘xc3 4.dc d6 5.♘f3 de 6.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 7.♘xe5 line (Chapter 21), White's king, not Black's, gets in the way of his own pieces.

5. ... g7-g6
6. ♗f1-c4 ...

Magnus is now less enthused about playing the Alekhine Defense, and the actual move order was slightly different anyway – 1.e4 g6 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘c3 d5 4.ed ♘xd5 5.♗c4 ♘xc3 6.bc.



6. ... ♗f8-g7
7. 0-0 ...

Nepomniachtchi does not waste any time on trying to prevent c7-c5. In the 7.♗a3 0-0 8.0-0 c5!? 9.♗xc5 ♕c7 10.d4 ♘d7 11.♗xe7 ♕xc4 12.♗xf8 ♘xf8 variation Black's bishops slightly outweigh White's rook and two pawns, Prince – Nataf, Paris 1993. However, White can play 8.d4, leading to positions analyzed in Chapter 11.

7. ... c7-c5
8. ♖f1-e1 0-0
9. ♘f3-g5 ...

Christensen and Lezcano (Copenhagen 2001) made an unequal exchange in a more traditional manner: 9.♘e5 ♘d7 10.f4 e6 11.♘xf7!? ♖xf7 12.♗xe6 ♘f6 13.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 14.♕e2 ♗f5 15.♖b1 b6. Houdini's approval of White's strategy fades with each passing move — Black has good prospects of active piece play.

9. ... ♘b8-c6
10. ♗c1-a3 ♕d8-a5
11. ♕d1-c1 ...

In the 11.♗xf7+ ♖xf7 12.♘xf7 ♔xf7 13.♕f3+ ♗f5 14.♕d5+ ♔f8 15.♗xc5 ♗f6 variation the players have equal chances. If 11...♔h8 12.♗d5 ♕xa3 13.♘f7+ Black can return his king to g8 and settle for a draw or keep fighting with 13...♖xf7 14.♗xf7 ♘e5 15.♗d5 c4.

11. ... e7-e6
12. ♘g5-e4 b7-b6
13. ♗a3-b2 ...

White's setup has not paid off. The Russian GM was not tempted by 13.d4 ♖b8 14.dc bc 15.♖b1 ♗a6 16.♗xa6 ♕xa6 17.♘xc5 ♕c4, and he started gradually reviving his dark-squared bishop.

13. ... ♗c8-a6
14. ♗c4xa6 ♕a5xa6
15. a2-a4 ♖f8-d8

15...c4!?, aiming to fix White's pawn on d2, is interesting. After 16.♗a3 ♖fd8, ♖d8-d5, and ♖a8-d8 White could start swarming in. It is not possible to post up a piece on d6 and the a3-f8 diagonal does not do anything for the bishop.

16. d2-d3 c5-c4
17. d3-d4 ♘c6-e7
18. ♕c1-e3 ♘e7-d5
19. ♕e3-g3 ♖a8-c8
20. ♗b2-c1 ♖d8-d7
21. ♗c1-g5 ♕a6-a5
22. ♖e1-b1?! ...

While White was busy resurrecting the bishop Black managed to achieve an excellent setup for his pieces. He even could have gained a significant edge at this point. The passive 22.♗d2 was necessary after all.

22. ... f7-f5
23. ♖b1-b5 ♕a5-a6
24. ♘e4-d2 ♕a6-b7

It is no easy task to foresee the consequences of 24...♘xc3! 25.♕xc3 ♗xd4 26.♕a3 ♗xa1 27.♕xa1 c3 28.♘f1 ♖d4 29.♕a3 ♕b7 during a blitz game. Carlsen will have a similar opportunity a couple of moves later...

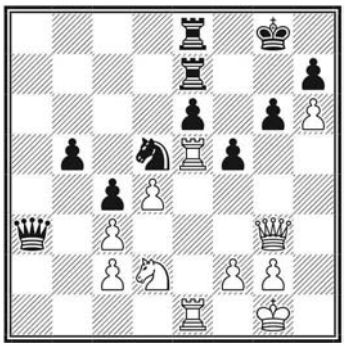
25. ♖b5-b1 ♕b7-c6
26. ♗g5-f4 ♖c8-e8?!

...namely, 26...♘xc3! 27.♕xc3 ♗xd4 28.♕b4 ♗xa1 29.♖xa1 ♕c5 30.♕xc5 ♖xc5.

27. ♖b1-e1 a7-a6

Now 27...♘xc3 fails to be as powerful as it had been: 28.♕xc3 ♗xd4 29.♕a3 ♗xa1 30.♕xa1 c3 31.♘f3 and ♗f4-e5. Nepomniachtchi counters Black's light-squared blockade with a blockade of his own on the dark squares. The players have equal chances.

28. h2-h4 b6-b5
29. a4xb5 a6xb5
30. ♗f4-e5 ♗g7xe5
31. ♖e1xe5 ♕c6-d6
32. ♖a1-e1 ♖d7-e7
33. h4-h5 ♖e7-g7
34. h5-h6 ♖g7-e7
35. ♖e1-b1 ♕d6-a6
36. ♖b1-e1 ♕a6-a3



Has not the queen wandered off too far already? The insane variation of 37.♘f3! ♕xc3? 38.♖xe6!! ♖xe6 39.♖xe6 ♖xe6 40.♕b8+ ♔f7 41.♘g5+ ♔f6 (41...♔e7 42.♕b7+) 42.♕d8+! ♖e7 43.♘xh7+ ♔e6 44.♘g5+ ♔f6 45.♘e4+! fe 46.h7 proves that it has. If 37...♕b2 now 38.♖xe6?? ♖xe6 39.♖xe6 ♕c1+ is no longer acceptable, but 38.♕h4 creates some potent threats. If 37...♘xc3 38.♘h4! (planning 39.♘xf5!) 38...f4! (38...♖f8? 39.d5) 39.♕g4 ♕a7 then it is not easy to hold the position, too.

37. ♕g3-g5 ♘d5xc3
38. ♘d2-b1 ♘c3xb1
39. ♖e1xb1 b5-b4
40. d4-d5 b4-b3
41. c2xb3 c4-c3

Super GMs probably can calculate to a draw—41...exd5! 42.♕f6 cb 43.♖be1 b2 44.♖xe7 ♖xe7 45.♖xe7 b1♕+ 46.♔h2 ♕b8+ 47.g3 ♕xe7 48.♕xe7 ♕f8 49.♕e6+ ♕f7 – but not when their flag is about to drop!

42. d5xe6 ...

42.♖xe6 ♖xe6 43.de is a bit better, although after 43...c2 44.♖c1 ♕d6 45.♖e1 ♖xe6 46.♖xe6 ♕xe6 47.♕d8+ ♔f7 48.♕c7+ ♔f6 49.♕xc2 ♕e1+ 50.♔h2 ♕e5+ 51.g3 f4 Black should not lose the resulting queen endgame.

42. ... c3-c2
43. ♖b1-c1 ♖e7-c7?!

The first of many ensuing imprecise moves. Black should have slid the queen over towards its subjects by playing 43...♕d6.

44. ♖e5-e1?! ...

In the 44.♖d5! ♖c6 45.♖d7 ♖cxe6 45.♖xc2 ♖6e7 46.♖xe7 ♕xe7 variation Black does not have a guaranteed draw.

44. ... ♕a3-b2?!

Carlsen really should have liquidated the pawn because now 45.♕f4! ♖c6 46.♕d2 ♖cxe6 47.♖xe6 ♖xe6 48.♖xc2 ♕e5 49.♖c1 would have presented Black with a formidable challenge — trying to fend off an outside passed pawn and protecting his king simultaneously. But the game goes into an equal rook endgame:

45. ♔g1-h2?! ♕b2xb3
46. ♕g5-f6 ♕b3-c3
47. ♕f6xc3 ♖c7xc3
48. ♖e1-e2 ♖e8-c8
49. e6-e7 ♔g8-f7
50. e7-e8♕+ ♖c8xe8
51. ♖e2xc2 ♖c3xc2
52. ♖c1xc2 g6-g5
53. ♖c2-c7+ ♔f7-g6
54. ♖c7-c6+ ♔g6-h5
55. ♔h2-g3 ♖e8-g8

56. ♖c6-f6 f5-f4+
57. ♔g3-f3 ♖g8-g6
58. ♖f6-f7 ♔h5xh6
59. ♔f3-g4 ♖g6-b6
60. ♖f7-f5 ♖b6-b2
61. ♖f5xg5 ♖b2xf2
62. ♖g5-h5+ ♔h6-g6
63. ♖h5-g5+
½ - ½

If 4.♘f3 then both 4...♗g4 and an exchange on c3, wrecking White's pawn structure, are solid continuations.

Chapter 11. 4.d4

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♘b1-c3 d7-d5
3. e4xd5 ♘f6xd5
4. d2-d4 ...



This overlaps with certain variations from Chapter 10. However, if an exchange of knights occurs (the chapter's main continuation), the pieces adjust to the existing structure, not the other way around, unlike in the 4.♘f3 line.

4. ... ♘d5xc3

If 4...♗f5 5.♗d3 ♗xd3 6.♕xd3 then Black has a sturdy position, but he seems to lack any active plans. For instance, 6...♘c6 7.♘f3 ♘db4 8.♕e2 ♘xd4 9.♘xd4 ♕xd4 10.0-0 e6 11.♕b5+ ♕d7 12.♕b7 ♕c6 13.♕xc6+ ♘xc6, and material is even, but Black has to watch out over his pawn islands.

4...g6 leads us back to the main line if Black eventually captures on c3. Luring the black queen out into the center and trying to chase it around does not produce any results: 5.♘xd5 ♕xd5 6.c4 ♕e4+ 7.♗e3 ♗h6 8.♕d3 ♕xd3 9.♗xd3 ♗xe3 10.fe 0-0. Brunello modified that idea slightly in his duel against Skytte (Denmark 2009): 6.♘f3 ♗g7 7.c4 ♕d6 8.♗e3 ♘c6 (8... ♕b4+!? 9.♕d2 ♘c6) 9.d5 ♘e5 10.c5 ♘xf3+ 11.♕xf3 ♕d7 12.0-0-0? ♕a4 13.♕f4 ♕xa2 14.♗b5+ c6 15.♗d4 ♗xd4 16.♕xd4 0-0 17.dc bc 18.♗xc6?! ♖b8 19.♗d5 ♕a5 20.♖he1 ♖b4 21.♕e5 ♕a1+. Playing aggressively wound up being disastrous for the white king; 12.a4 0-0 13.♗b5 would at least have kept the queen at bay.

5. b2xc3 g7-g6

One should always consider 5... e5!?, gaining tangible compensation for the sacrificed pawn after 6.de

♕xd1+ 7.♔xd1 ♘c6. After 8.f4 ♗g4+ 9.♘f3 f6 10.♗d3 0-0-0 11.♖e1 ♗c5 12.ef gf 13.♗e3 ♗xf3+ 14.gf ♗xe3 15.♖xe3 ♖hg8 16.♔d2 Koziak consolidated his forces well against Pesotsky (Kiev 2009), which is harder to do in the event of 10... fxe5 11.fe 0-0-0. Perhaps 6.♕e2 ♘c6 7.f4 is the best way to pick up the pawn.

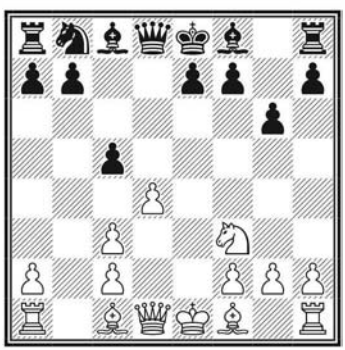
Naturally, 5...e6 is a reasonable alternative to fianchettoing the bishop. Nimzowitsch and Alapin (St. Petersburg 1913) arrived at the position resulting after 6.♘f3, but the move order was different: 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.ed ♘xd5 5.♘f3 ♘xc3 6.bc. Black's hopeless play soon got him into hot water: 6... ♘d7 7.♗d3 ♗e7 8.0-0 0-0 9.♕e2 ♖e8 10.a4 a5 11.♖e1 c6 12.♗f4 ♘f8 13.c4 ♗d6?! 14.♗xd6 ♕xd6 15.c5 ♕d8 16.♕e4 f5?! 17.♕e3 ♗d7 18.♖ab1. Alapin even decided against developing his bad queen's bishop (after 9...♖b8 and b7-b6), although exerting pressure on the center is definitely more promising than mundane developing moves.

So, let us consider 6...c5. Now the Alekhine intersects with the Sicilian: 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘c3 d5 4.ed ♘xd5 5.d4 ♘xc3 6.bc e6. In his superb book on the Rubinstein Variation, Grigory Bogdanovich contends that players have equal chances — that is only true if Black has developed his knight to c6 (putting some pressure on d4), not d7. Schmittdiel gave his pawn under attack to Veinger (Seefeld 1998) to deprive his opponent of castling rights: 7.♗d3 ♘c6 8.0-0 ♗e7 9. ♕e2 cd 10.cd ♘xd4 11.♘xd4 ♕xd4 12.♗e3 ♕e5 13.♗b5+ ♔f8 14.♖ad1 f6 15.f4 ♕c7 16.♗d4 g6 17.♔h1 ♔g7 18.♗c4 ♖e8 19.♗b3 a5 20.♕b5 ♕c6 21.♗a4 ♕xb5 22.♗xb5 ♖d8. Black defended excellently: White's initiative evaporated, but the extra pawn did not.

6. ♘g1-f3 ...

Developing the knight to e2 does not provide any noticeable benefits. For instance, 6.♗c4 ♗g7 7.♘e2 0-0 8.0-0 c5 9.♖b1 cd 10.cd ♕c7 11.♗d3 ♖d8 12.c3 e5 with energetic play against the pawn duo. Or 6.♗d3 ♗g7 7.♘e2 0-0 8.0-0 c5 9.♗a3 cd 10.cd ♘c6 11.c3 ♕a5 12.♕b3 ♗e6!? 13.♕b2 (13.♕xb7 ♘xd4 14.♘xd4 ♕xa3 15.♘xe6 fe is just as good) 13...♖ac8 14.♖fe1 ♖fd8 15.♗b5 ♗f6 16.♖ad1 a6 17.♗d3 b5 Meijers – Van Winsen, Duisburg 1999. Meijers' few extra hundred rating points still had not given him any hint at an advantage.

6. ... c7-c5



We have returned to the Rubinstein Variation once again (1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘c3 d5 4.ed ♘xd5 5.d4 ♘xc3 6.bc g6). Relative to the 5...e6 6.♘f3 c5 variation the queen's bishop is not locked in and the king's bishop will find it easier to put some heat on White's pawns. Obviously, Black is doing fine.

7. ♗f1-c4 ...

V.Bagirov proved how harmless Black's battery on the dark squares was way back in 1962 during his game against Mosionzhik (♘ovosibirsk 1962): 7.♗e3 ♗g7 8.♕d2 ♕a5 9.♗c4 ♘c6 10.♖b1 a6 11.h4 h6 12.h5 g5 13.♗d5 cd (13... g4!?) 14.♗xc6+ bc 15.cd?! ♕xa2. There is no tangible compensation for the pawn, so White should have gone for 15.♗xd4 e5 16.♗b6 ♕d5 17.c4 ♕e4+ 18.♕e2 ♗f5 19.♕xe4 ♗xe4. The 21st century has not taught us anything new: 7.♗b5+ ♗d7 8.♕e2 ♗g7 9.0-0 cd 10.cd ♗xb5 11.♕xb5+ ♕d7 12.a4 0-0 13.♗a3 ♖d8 14.♖ab1 b6 15.♖fe1 ♘c6 16.c3 e6 17.♕g5 draw, Mainka – Eingorn, Bad Wiessee 2010. Black probably agreed to a draw too hastily because he still had ♘c6-a5-c4.

7. ... ♗f8-g7
8. 0-0 0-0
9. ♗c1-a3 ...

After 9.♗e3 cd 10.cd ♘c6 11.c3 the position coincides with games coming out of other openings. It appears as though only Black has real play (blockading the pawn pair): 11...♘a5 12.♗e2 ♗e6 13.♕a4 ♖c8 14.♗g5 b6 15.♕a3 ♖e8 16.♗a6 ♖a8 17.♖fe1 ♕d6 18.♕b4 h6 19.♗h4 g5 20.♗g3 ♕xb4 21.cb ♗c4 22.♗xc4 ♘xc4 Orsag – Heberla, Czech Republic 2005.

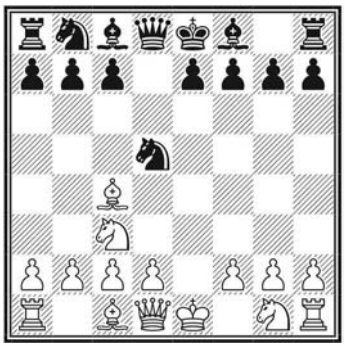
9. ... ♘b8-d7
10. d4xc5 ♕d8-c7

In Feist – Kunin (Germany 2005) after 11.♕d5 ♘e5 12.♘xe5 ♗xe5 13.♕f3 ♗xh2+ 14.♔h1 ♗e5 15.♖fe1 ♗d7 16.♖ad1 ♗c6 17.♕e3 ♗f6 White held onto the c5-pawn by shedding its comrade on h2, while the queen's bishop had no scope whatsoever. 11.♘d4 ♘xc5 12.♘b5 ♕b6 13.♕f3 is a relatively better solution.

So, one can say that Black should capture on c3 immediately in reply to 4.d4. White does not actually get anything in exchange for his damaged pawn structure.

Chapter 12. Various replies to 4.♗c4

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♘b1-c3 d7-d5
3. e4xd5 ♘f6xd5
4. ♗f1-c4 ...



Rightfully, the most viable 4th move. White attacks the centralized knight, and Black is forced to make some major or minor concessions. 4...e6 is considered in Chapter 13, 4...c6 in Chapter 14, and 4...♘b6, a counterattack, unlike the pawn moves, is analyzed in Chapters 15 and 16. There are not many other 'various replies' in this chapter.

4. ... ♘d5xc3

This exchange, which proved to be rather favorable for Black in Chapters 10 and 11, is worth considering here, too. Quite to the contrary, 4...♘f6 looks to be too big of a concession. After 5.d4 g6 6.♘f3 one can clearly see that the position has transposed into a variation of the Scandinavian Defense, an undesirable one for Black (1.e4 d5 2.ed ♕xd5 3.♘c3 ♕d8 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 g6 6.♗c4). Naturally, Timoshenko – Verdes (Tarragona 2006) should be viewed as a freak accident, but Black has no active play at all, in any case: 6... ♗g7 7. 0-0 c6 8.♖e1 0-0 9.h3 ♘bd7 10.♕e2 ♖e8?? (10...♘b6 11.♗b3 is best, and only then 11...♖e8) 11.♗xf7+! ♔xf7 12.♘g5+.

4...♗e6 followed by retreating the knight and offering an exchange of bishops faintly resembles the 2.e5 ♘d5 3.d4 d6 4.♘f3 de 5.♘xe5 g6 6.♗c4 ♗e6 variation, and is more or less acceptable for Black. Nevertheless, if 5.♕f3 c6 6.♘ge2 (6.♘h3 ♘c7 7.d3 ♗xc4 8.dc ♘d7 9.♘g5 f6 10.♘ge4 is not bad either) 6...♘c7 7.♗xe6 ♘xe6 8.0-0 g6 9.d4!? ♗g7 10.d5!? ♘c7 11.♖d1 cd 12.♘xd5 ♘xd5 13.♖xd5 ♕c8 14.♗g5 then White still has a more active position, Tissir – Damia, Sautron 2008. It is dangerous to accept the pawn sacrifice in the center: 9...♘xd4?! 10.♘xd4 ♕xd4 11.♖d1 ♕h4? 12.♘e4 ♕h5 13.♘f6+! ef 14.♖e1+ ♗e7 15.♕xf6 0-0 16.♕xe7 – mines are going off all over the place!

5. ♕d1-f3 ...

This is how White avoids getting doubled pawns. 5.bc e6 6.♘f3 ♗e7 7.0-0 0-0 8.d4 c5 9.♕e2 ♘c6 is not dangerous for Black, which we gleaned from the other similar lines in Chapter 11. 10.♖d1 cd 11.cd ♘b4 12.♗b3 a5 13.a3 ♘d5 14.♕d3 a4 15.♗c4 ♗d7 16.♗d2 ♕c7 17.♗a2 b5 18.♘e5 ♖fc8 19.♘xd7 ♕xd7 could follow, Meijers – Bogdanovich, Germany 2001 – the bishop pair does not do a single thing for White.

Caution! 5...♘c6 6.♘f3 ♗g4?? fails horribly to 7.♗xf7+!, a typical

sacrifice. But should we really have to warn you about that? 18(!) players have moved their bishop to g4, making it the most common move. But only three of them have found how to refute Black's terrible blunder! Naturally, 6...♗f5 or 6...e6 bode well for Black, and the position should be interesting and roughly equal.

5...e5 would allow White to pounce upon f7. However, he does not derive many concrete benefits from doing so. In the 6.♕h5 ♕f6 7.♘f3 ♘c6 8.♘g5 g6 9.♗xf7+ ♕xf7 10.♘xf7 gh 11.♘xh8 ♗g7 variation Black would get two pieces for a rook and pawns, none of which will turn into a passed pawn soon.

5. ... e7-e6

6. ♕f3xc3 ...

The queen is aiming at the c7- and g7-pawns. The unfavorable pawn structure (for White) resulting after 6.dc is seen more often with the 2.e5 ♘d5 3.♘c3 ♘xc3 4.dc move order. White's initiative probably does not outweigh his defective pawn structure. After 6...♗d6 now 7.♘e2 0-0 8.0-0?!, seemingly the most natural course of development, runs into 8...♗xh2+!. 6...♘c6 7.♕g3 ♕d6 8.♗f4 e5 9.♗e3 f5 10.♖d1 ♕f6 11.♗g5 ♕g6 12.♘f3 has been tried before, and a Bulgarian amateur fell into a relatively straightforward trap set by the GM: 12...♗d6? 13.♘xe5!, intending to mate on d8 with the rook, V.Onischuk – Slavov, Plovdiv 2012. 12...f4 13.♕h4 ♕e4+ 14.♗e2 ♗e6 is the correct continuation, and once again White cannot castle right away.

6. ... ♘b8-c6

A few other moves are worth analyzing. After 6...c5 7.♘f3 ♘c6 8.0-0 Black can place the knight on d4 or start a pawn storm with a7-a6 and b7-b5. 6...♘d7 (the king's knight has been exchanged on the queenside, so the queen's knight rushes to fill the void left by it) 7.♘f3 ♘f6 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.d4 0-0 10.♘e5 c5 11.♗e3 ♕c7 12.♖ad1 (Akopian – Yermolinsky, Glendale 1994) 12...♗d6 13.♘f3 b6 14.dc ♗xc5 15.♗xc5 ♕xc5=.

6...♕g5, guarding g7 and attacking g2, is interesting. If 7.♘f3 ♕xg2 8.♖g1 ♕h3 9.♗f1 ♕f5 10.♕xc7 ♘c6 11.d3 ♗d7 then the queen has reached the c7-pawn, but White is not in an enviable position. 9.♖xg7!? ♗xg7 10.♕xg7 ♖f8 11.♘g5 ♕g4 12.b3 is stronger, and White has obvious compensation for the exchange after he develops the bishop.

7. ♘g1-f3 ...

Alekhine in a simul game against Zalucha (Chicago 1932), followed up with 7.♘e2 ♕f6 8.♕xf6 gf 9.d4 ♗d7 10.c3 0-0-0 11.♗e3 h5 12.h4 ♗h6 13.♗xh6 ♖xh6 14.0-0-0 ♘e7 15.♘f4 ♗c6. Black has not given an inch to his great examiner, and he eventually drew this game.

7. ... ♕d8-f6

Exchanging queens is acceptable for Black, even if it damages his

pawn chain a little. Moreover, he really did not have much of a choice because of White's pressure on g7. In the 7...♗d7, ♕d8-e7 and 0-0-0 setup, a2-a3 and b2-b4 is one of the most active plans. The queen is ideally placed on c3.

8. ♕c3xf6 g7xf6
9. d2-d4 ♗f8-d6



Black maintains equality easily because White does not have any aggressive or dangerous plans. For instance, 10.♗e3 ♖g8 11.g3 ♘e7 12.♗b5+ ♗d7 13.♗xd7+ ♔xd7 14.0-0-0 b5 15.c3 ♘d5 16.♔c2 h5 17.♖he1 ♖g4 18.♘h4 a6 19.f3 ♖g7 20.♗d2 c6 21.b3 a5 has been played, and Black has a good setup in Kernazhitsky – V.Sergeev, Stary Smokovec 1996. Or 10.♗d2 ♗d7 11.0-0-0 ♘e7 12.♖he1 ♗c6 13.♗e2 0-0-0 14.g3 ♘f5 15.♗c3 ♗e7 16.g4 ♘d6 17.♘d2 ♘b5 18.♗xb5 ♗xb5 with the bishop pair, Cannon – Pesotsky, Stare Mesto 2010.

4...♘xc3 equalizes without much difficulty. The only difficulty is that it is hard for Black to find ways of gaining an advantage because the position has been simplified.

Chapter 13. 4.♗c4 e6

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♘b1-c3 d7-d5
3. e4xd5 ♘f6xd5
4. ♗f1-c4 e7-e6

Diagram

Black has set up a roadblock to impede White's bishop. The main drawback is that Black has to do something about his bad bishop on c8.



5. ♕d1-f3 ...

Exerting pressure on d5. In Game 17 a knight will be on f3.

Grigoriants – Guseinov (Moscow 1996) followed up with 5.♘ge2 ♗e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.d4 c6 8.♘e4 ♘d7 9.a3 b6 10.♗d3 f5 11.♘4g3 ♘7f6 12.c4 ♘c7 13.b3 ♗b7 14.♗b2 a5 15.♕c2 c5?! 16.♖ad1 ♕e8 17.d5 – Black was too late with c7-c5, so White breaking through in the center threw him for a loop. 14...c5 15.♕c2 cd 16.♘xd4 ♗c5, with excellent play for Black, was necessary.

Krizsany and Videki pointed out the paradoxical exchange of 5.♗xd5!? ed, and surprisingly enough, White wins a pawn in view of 6.♕e2+. Analysis from Hungary wrongfully criticized 6...♗e6, since after 7.♕b5+ ♘c6 8.♕xb7 Black should play 8...♘b4 9.♘b5 ♖b8 10.♘xc7+ ♔d7 11.♕xa7 ♕xc7 12.♕xc7+ ♔xc7, giving him decent prospects in a complicated endgame, instead of 8...♘d4? 9.♘b5!.

6...♗e7 7.♕e5 0-0 8.♕xd5 ♗d6 9.d3 ♘c6 10.♗g5 ♖e8+ 11.♘ge2 ♕d7 12.♗e3 ♘b4 13.♕b3 ♕g4 14.♔d2 ♗e6 15.♕a4 ♗d7 16.♕b3 ♗e6 17.♕a4 is just as good, and after repeating moves Fioramonti with good reasons continued fighting against Egger (Maringa 1991) with 17...a6. 7...d4!? 8.♘b5 0-0 9.♕xd4 ♗d7 10.♕c4 ♗c6 looks appealing for Black, as well as 8.♘d5 ♘c6! 9.♕xg7 ♖f8 10.♘xe7 ♕xe7+ 11.♔d1 d3!

5. ... ♘d5-b4

White has failed to keep an eye on c2, which Black capitalizes upon by this knight sortie. 5...c6 coincides with the 4...c6 line and will be analyzed in Chapter 14. Therefore, 5...♘b6 6.♗b3 ♘c6 and 6...c5 7.d3 ♘c6 are key components of the 4... ♘b6 sideline. The queen coming out to play early on may give Black an idea of 6...♗d7!? (7.d3 ♗c6 8.♕g3 ♕f6 9.♗f4 ♕g6 10.f3 ♗d6, and the attack along the diagonal runs into a dead-end because g2 is hanging).

6. ♗c4-b3 ♘b8-c6

Black is holding his own on d4, so there is no real need for c7-c5. Nevertheless, 6...c5 7.a3 ♘4c6 8.♘ge2 ♗d6 9.d3 0-0 10.♗f4 ♗xf4 11.♕xf4 ♕e7 12.0-0 b6 and ♗c8-b7 is favorable for Black.

7. ♘g1-e2 ♘c6-a5

8. ♗b3-a4+ ...

Caution! According to the Megabase, eight players paid no mind to the threat on c2, and after 8.♘e4?? ♘xb3 9.♕xb3 ♕d5! they could have raised the white flag without any reservations.

8. ... ♗c8-d7

In Skliarov – Nosenko (Mukachevo 2012) after 8...c6 9.a3 ♘d5 10.b4 ♘c4 11.d3 ♘e5 12.♕e4 ♗d6 13.f4 ♘d7 14.d4?! 0-0 15.0-0 b5 16.♗b3 a5 17.ba ♕xa5 18.♕d3 ♘7f6 19.♗d2 ♕c7 20.♘xd5 ed 21.♗b4 ♖e8 Black gained a clear advantage by forcing the b3-bishop onto the sidelines. If 14.♘xd5 cd 15.♕e3 a5 16.♗b2 then it is not

too easy for them to attack on the queenside.

9. a2-a3 ♘b4-d5
10. ♗a4xd7+ ...

An immediate exchange of bishops, as well as the complicated continuations 10.b4 ♗xa4 11.♘xa4 ♘c4 12.♘b2 ♘e5 13.♕e4 ♘c6 or 10.♘xd5 ♗xa4 11.♘e3 c5!? 12.b4 ♘c6 13.bc ♗xc5 14.♗b2 ♗xe3 15.fe ♕h4+ 16.g3 ♕h6 do not put Black in any serious danger.

10. ... ♕d8xd7

11.♘xd5 ♕xd5 12.♕xd5 ed 13.d3 0-0-0 14.0-0 ♗d6 15.♗e3 ♘c6 16.♘d4 ♘xd4 17.♗xd4 f6 18.♖fe1 ♔d7 19.♖e2 ♖he8 with subsequent exchanges along the opening file led to a boring, equal position in Hindermann – S.Pavlov, Shenzhen 2011. In Kornasiewicz – Komarov (Belgium 1992) White spiced things up a bit, but after 11.0-0 ♗e7 12.d3 ♘xc3 13.♘xc3 0-0 14.♖e1 c5 15.♗f4 ♘c6 16.♖ac1 ♘d4 17.♕g3 f6 18.♘e2 e5 19.♗d2 ♘c6 20.♗e3 ♔h8 21.f4 ♗d6 22.♕f2 b6 23.f5 ♘e7 he ceded some space and one can only attribute the ensuing truce to his opponent's graciousness.

Game 17
A.Bisguier – P.Keres
Tallinn 1971

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♘b1-c3 d7-d5
3. e4xd5 ♘f6xd5
4. ♗f1-c4 e7-e6
5. ♘g1-f3 ♗f8-e7
6. 0-0 0-0
7. d2-d4 ...

A few players have tried 7.♘e4, trying to avoid getting double pawns. But then White cannot post up a pawn in the center: 7...c5 8.c3 ♘b6 9.♗b3 c4 10.♗c2 ♕d5 11.d3 cd 12.♕xd3 ♕xd3 13.♗xd3 ♗d7=.

7. ... b7-b6

The variations with an exchange on c3 were covered in Chapter 12.



8. ♘c3-e4 ...

Now it is worth taking a closer look at an exchange on d5. The structure resulting after 8.♘xd5 ed 9.♗d3 is pretty standard, and it gives White a stable advantage. The bishop is passive on b7, while if it comes out onto the c8-h3 diagonal it is leaving the light squares unguarded. By starting out with 8.♘e5 ♗b7, an exchange will allow White to post up a piece on d5: 9.♘xd5 ♗xd5 10.♗xd5 ♕xd5 11.c4 ♕d8 (11...♕b7!?) 12.♕f3 c6 13.♖d1 ♕c7 14.♗f4 ♗d6 15.♕g3 ♘a6 16.c5! bc 17.dc ♘xc5 18.♖xd6

♕xd6 19.♗h6 g6 20.♗xf8 ♕xf8 21.♘xc6 Yandemirov – Feoktistov, Novgorod 1999. Black has not equalized, though.

8. ... ♗c8-b7

9. ♕d1-e2 ...

The ♕e2+♖d1 setup is most reasonable because Black is just about to push c5. In Simacek – V.Sergeev (Czech Republic 2001) White opted for 9.♖e1 ♘d7 10.♘e5 c5 11.♗b5 ♘xe5 12.de ♘c7 13.♕xd8 ♖fxd8 14.♗d3 h6 15.♘c3 ♘d5 16.♘xd5 ♗xd5 17.♗a6 ♖ab8, and he could not gain an advantage.

9. ... ♘b8-d7

10. ♖f1-d1 c7-c5

11. ♗c4-b5 ...

Bagirov puts a question mark after this move. That is an incorrect evaluation of the position because if 11.dc ♘xc5 12.♘xc5 ♗xc5 13.♗d3 ♕c7 14.♕e4 ♘f6 15.♕h4 ♗xf3 16.gf ♗e7 then the bishop pair barely makes up for his army's fractured pawns.

11. ... c5xd4

12. ♘f3xd4 ♕d8-c7

13. c2-c4?! ...

In the 13.♗xd7 ♕xd7 14.c4 ♘f6 15.♘f5 ♕c7 16.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 17.♘d6 ♖ad8 18.♗f4 variation White has better chances because it is really hard to kick the knight off d6. If 14...♗a6!? (Keres) 15.♗d2 ♖ac8 16.b3 ♖fd8 then the sides are on even footing.

13. ... ♘d5-f6

14. ♘e4xf6+ ♘d7xf6

15. ♗c1-e3 ♖a8-c8

16. ♖a1-c1 ♖f8-d8

17. ♗b5-a4 ♕c7-e5

18. ♗a4-c2 ♗e7-c5

19. f2-f4? ...

This weakening move makes the famous American GM look bad. He should have prepared for simplifications along the open file by playing ♘d4-b5-c3.

19. ... ♕e5-c7

20. ♘d4-b3 ♗c5xe3+

21. ♕e2xe3 g7-g6

22. ♗c2-d3 ♘f6-h5

23. ♖d1-f1 ♘h5xf4!

Keres punished White's erroneous 19th move rather quickly. However, Bisguier was still just as accident-prone, which he demonstrated on move 33.

24. ♖f1xf4 ♖d8xd3

25. ♕e3xd3 ♕c7xf4

26. ♖c1-f1 ♕f4-g5

27. ♖f1-f2 ♖c8-d8

28. ♕d3-e2 h7-h5

29. ♘b3-d2 ♕g5-g4

30. ♕e2-e1 h5-h4

31. h2-h3 ♕g4-g5

32. b2-b3 ♖d8-d3

33. ♘d2-e4? ...

33.♔h2? would have been crushed by 33...♖xh3+!, so White should have chosen between 33.♘f1 or 33.♕e2, feigning some resistance.

33. ... ♗b7xe4

34. ♕e1xe4 ♖d3-d1+

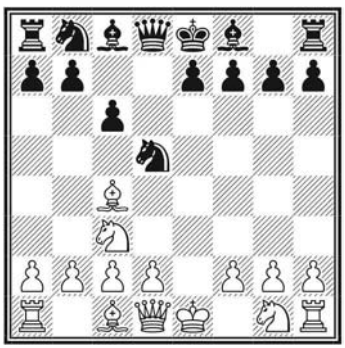
35. ♖f2-f1 ♕g5-c5+

0-1

Black benefits from exchanging on c3, if White's knight comes to its conventional post on f3. And if the queen turns up on f3 then 5...♘b4 solves Black's opening problems best of all.

Chapter 14. 4.♗c4 c6

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♘b1-c3 d7-d5
3. e4xd5 ♘f6xd5
4. ♗f1-c4 c7-c6



Unlike in the Chapter 13 variations, the bishop on c8 has not been shut in yet.

5. ♕d1-f3 ...

Obviously, if White replies with 5.d4 then the bishop is ready to come out to f5, while if 5.♘f3 then it will probably pin the knight. Chances are roughly equal, although in the following examples from grandmasters' games White was not very good, to put it mildly. After 5.d4 ♗f5 6.♘f3 e6 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.♕e2 ♘d7 9.♘e4 0-0 10.♗b3 h6 11.c4 ♘5f6 12.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 13.♗f4 c5 14.♖ad1? cd 15.♗d6?! d3 16.♕e3 ♗e7 17.c5 ♖c8 18.♘d4 ♗xd6 19.♘xf5? ♘xc5 20.♘xd6 ♕xd6 Yandemirov – Maksimenko, Lvov 1995, White is two pawns down and has a bad position! Apparently, White had missed 15.♘xd4 ♗xd4 16.♖xd4 e5! 17.♗xe5 ♕e7 18.♕h5 g6 19.♕xh6 ♕xe5, and then he took the path of least resistance, clearly frustrated. In Galego – Giri (Eilat 2012) after 5.♘f3 ♗g4 6.h3 ♗h5 7.d3 e6 8.♘e4 ♘d7 9.♘g3 ♗b4+ 10.♔f1?! ♗g6 11.♕e2 ♗e7 12.♗d2 a5 13.h4 h6 14.♗xd5 cd 15.♗c3 0-0 White could not prove it was beneficial having the king on f1. 10.c3 ♘xc3 11.bc ♗xc3+ 12.♗d2 ♗xf3 13.gf ♗xa1 14.♕xa1 ♕f6 15.♔e2 ♕xa1 16.♖xa1 is stronger — White has mangled pawns, however, black rooks are lacking open files. If you change the move order with 10... ♗xf3 11.♕xf3 ♘xc3, then 12.0-0 ♘d5 13.♘h5 gives White decent compensation for the damage done.

5. ... e7-e6

5...♗e6 is considered with a different move order: 4...♗e6 5.♕f3 c6. The retreat 5...♘f6 may appear to be a concession to the untrained eye. However, White will have to return the tempo he has been given

because of ♗c8-g4. Yermolinsky equalized in his game against Rozentalis (Moscow 1994) after 6.h3 ♘bd7 7.♕e2 g6 8.♘f3 ♘b6 (8...♗g7? 9.♗xf7+!) 9.♗b3 ♗g7 10.0-0 0-0 11.d3 ♘bd5 12.♗d2 a5 13.a3 ♗e6.

Barczay ignored prophylactic measures in his game against Volkmann, Oberwart 1995: 6.♘ge2 ♗g4 7.♕g3 e6 8.d4 ♗d6 9.♗f4 ♗xe2 10.♗xe2 ♗xf4 11.♕xf4 0-0 12.0-0-0 ♘bd7 13.♖d3 ♘b6 14.♖g3 ♘fd5 15.♕g4 ♕f6 16.♖f3 ♕h6+ 17.♔b1 ♘xc3+ 18.♖xc3 ♖ad8 19.♖d1 ♘d5 20.♖g3 ♖d7 21.♗d3 ♘f4 22.c3 ♘xd3 23.♖dxd3 ♖fd8 24.♖h3 ♕g6 25.♕xg6 hg. As one could have foreseen, White's onslaught turned out to be harmless, and a draw became quite probable. 8...b5, attacking on the flank and aiming at the d4-pawn, is interesting. White can choose between exchanging queens with 9.♗g5 ♘bd7 10.♕xg4 ♘xg4 11.♗xd8 ♖xd8 12.♗d3 or more sharp line 9.♗d3 b4 10.f3 ♗d6 11.♕h4 ♗xf3 12.gf bc 13.♘xc3, followed by ♖h1-g1.

6. ♘g1-e2 ♘b8-d7

7. d2-d4 ♘d5xc3

This is the most optimal moment for an exchange because if 8.♕xc3 or 8.♘xc3 ♘b6 9.♕d3 the white queen is best placed. Kengis offered an exchange of queens against Hickl, Adelaide 1990: 7...♕f6 8.♘xd5 ed 9.♕xf6 ♘xf6 10.♗d3 ♗d6 11.f3 h5 12.h4 ♗d7 13.♔f2 g6 14.♗g5 ♘h7 15.♗f4 ♗xf4 16.♘xf4 0-0 17.♖he1 ♖fe8 18.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 19.b4 ♘f8 20.a4 ♘e6 21.♘xe6 ♖xe6 with a dead-even position and a quick draw. In Donko – Chetverik (Kecskemet 1999) the players kept tension in the position with parity of possibilities after 7...♘7f6 8.♗g5 ♕a5 9.♗d2 ♕c7 10.0-0-0 b5 11.♗d3 ♗b7 12.g4 b4 13.♘xd5 ♘xd5 14.♖he1 ♗d6 15.h4 0-0-0.

8. b2xc3 ♗f8-e7

In Markovic – Andonov (Belgrade 2002) Black tried to set up a blockade — 8...♗d6 9.♗d3 c5 10.0-0 ♕c7 11.♘g3 c4 12.♗e2 ♘f6 13.♗g5 ♘d5. White went into open combat, and after 14.♘f5!? ♗xh2+ 15.♔h1 ef 16.♕xd5 ♗d6 17.♕xc4 ♕xc4 18.♗xc4 f4 19.♖fe1+ ♔f8 20.f3 h6 21.♗h4 ♗f5 22.♗d3 ♗xd3 23.cd g5 24.♗f2 ♔g7 25.c4 he obtained a slightly better endgame. It probably would have been more precise to keep queens on the board with 16...h6 17.♗d2 ♗d6 18.♕xc4 ♕d8.

9. 0-0 0-0

10. ♗c1-f4 ...

Luckily enough, White avoids falling into a trap—10.♖d1?? ♘e5!. This blunt move once ruined a player with rating over 2200, C.Mueller – Bouaraba, Germany 1999.

10. ... ♘d7-f6

11. ♗f4-e5 ♗c8-d7

12. ♗c4-d3 b7-b6

13. ♕f3-h3 g7-g6

14. ♕h3-h6 ♖f8-e8

15. c3-c4 c6-c5

It is best to push the pawn after

forcing White's pieces back (15... ♘h5 16.♕d2 f6 17.♗g3 c5), since now 16.dc ♗xc5 17.♘g3 would be more promising.

16. c2-c3 ♗d7-c6
17. ♖a1-d1 ♗e7-f8
18. ♕h6-h3 ♘f6-d7
19. ♗e3-f4 ♗f8-g7
20. ♗f4-h6 ♗g7-h8
21. d4-d5 e6xd5
22. c4xd5 ...

After 22...♗xd5?! 23.♘f4 ♗c6 25.♗f5 ♖e7 26.♗g5! gf (Pokorna – De Firmian, Greenland 2003) 26.♕g3! ♗g7 27.♘h5 f6 28.♘xf6+ ♔h8 29.♘xd7 ♕xd7 30.♖xd7 ♖xd7 31.♖e1 it is pretty hard for Black to prove he has sufficient compensation for the sacrificed queen. 22...♗a4 23.♖d2 b5, with counterplay on the queenside, winds up being a significant improvement.

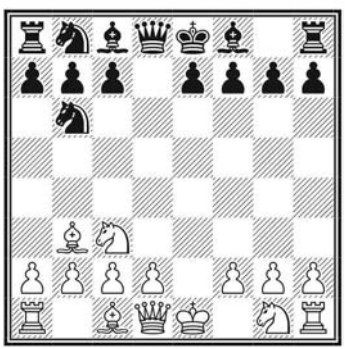
We do not see any obvious pitfalls in reinforcing the centralized knight with 4...c6. Black can even shift the knight away from the center (5.♕f3 ♘f6), although it would be a pity to miss one's chance at exchanging on c3.

Chapter 15. 4.♗c4 ♘b6 5.♗b3 c5

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♘b1-c3 d7-d5
3. e4xd5 ♘f6xd5
4. ♗f1-c4 ♘d5-b6

Black has won a tempo by the knight retreat. He can either develop his knight to c6 (see next chapter) or renew his attack on the opponent's bishop.

5. ♗c4-b3 ...



5. ... c7-c5!?

Bagirov gave this move a question mark and made a long-winded comment. Here is part of it: 'Black is too eager to trap White's bishop with c4 or he is looking to secure d4 for his bishop, at the very least.' Black's eagerness is explicable, as well as quite justified. But let us take a glance at two other moves.

5...e5 is not at all impressive. One can see its drawbacks further down the line: 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.h3 0-0 9.♖e1 a5 10.a4 ♗f6 11.d3 ♗f5 12.♘e4 ♗xe4 13.♖xe4 ♖e8 14.♗d2 Tomescu – Iankowski, Bucharest 1995. Black's pieces are immobilized, forced to guard his central pawn, and the b3-bishop lacks its opponent. 6.♕h5 ♕f6 7.♘f3 ♗f5 8.d4! ed 9.♘xd4 ♗g6

10.♕e2+ ♗e7 11.♘f3 is even more convincing. Black cannot castle because of ♗c1-g5, while castling after 11...h6 12.♗e3 is out of the question because of the ensuing exchange on b6.

It is not worth developing the bishop to f5 either. After 5...♗f5?! 6.♕f3 White's double attack essentially forces 6...♕c8, an ugly defensive move. Buchnicek – Schwartz (Pardubice 1999) continued 7.♘ge2 ♘c6 8.d4 e6 9.♗f4 ♗d6 10.0-0-0 ♘a5 11.g4 ♘xb3+ 12.ab ♗g6 13.♗xd6 cd 14.♘f4 0-0 15.h4, and now 15... e5! 16.de de 17.♘xg6 fg, followed by ♖f8-f4, led to the level position. White has to adjust the move order slightly, and he will have better chances at succeeding with his kingside attack: 14.h4 h6 15.♘f4 ♗h7 16.g5 ♗f5 17.♘h5.

6. ♕d1-h5 ...

Game 5 between Alekhine and Potemkin, from the historical background section, focuses on 6.d3, a rather modest move.

6. ... c5-c4!

This time Bagirov makes a succinct comment: 'One should note that 6...c4? fails to 7.♗xc4 ♘xc4 8.♕b5+.' Just like that, fascinating variations involving a pawn sacrifice have been discarded. In Djurhuus – Laveryd (Sweden 2002) 6...e6 7.♘f3 ♘c6 8.d3 g6 9.♕h3 ♘d4 10.♘xd4 cd 11.♘e4 h6 12.♕g3 ♗g7 13.♘d6+ ♔f8 14.♗f4 ♘d5 15.♗xd5 ♕a5+ 16.♗d2 ♕xd5 17.♗b4 ♔g8 18.♕f4 e5 19.♕e4 ♗e6 20.0-0 ♖d8 21.♕xd5 ♗xd5 22.♘e4 ♖c8 23.c3 dc 24.♗xc3 ♔h7 followed. Black has connected his rooks and stands no worse. If 14.0-0 ♔g8 15.♗f4 ♘d5 16.♗xd5 ed 17.♗e5 then Black has been unable to centralize his queen and he has significant difficulties. 11... ♗b4+ 12.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 13.♘xd2 0-0 is relatively better than 11...h6.

7. ♗b3xc4 ♘b6xc4

8. ♕h5-b5+ ♘b8-c6

Leonhardt and Stoltz (Berlin 1928) arrived at an alternative setup — 8...♗d7!? 9.♕xc4 ♗c6 — but this line never gained much popularity due to the players' weak play. However, here Black also has a long-lasting initiative for the pawn, which is grossly underestimated by Houdini:

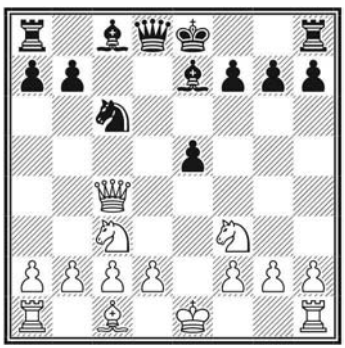
1) 10.♕g4 h5 11.♕g3 ♘a6 12.a3 ♖h6 13.f3 ♖g6 14.♕f2 e5 15.d3 ♗c5 (15.b4!? would not have allowed Black to place his bishop on such a favorable square) 16.♗e3 ♕b6 17.♘d1 ♗xe3 18.♕xe3 ♖xg2 19.♕xb6 ab 20.♘e3 ♖g6 with a more pleasant endgame for Black in Johanesson – Thorhallsson, Reykjavik 1988.

2) 10.♘f3 ♗xf3 11.gf ♘c6 12.♕a4 ♕d7 13.d3 ♘d4 14.♕xd7+ ♔xd7 15.♔d1 ♘xf3 16.♗e3 e6 17.♔e2 ♘h4 18.♖hg1 ♘f5 19.♘e4 h6 20.♘g3 ♘xe3 21.♔xe3 f6 22.d4 g5 23.♔d3 ♗d6 24.♖ae1 ♖af8 Pokorna – Krivoshey, Dunajska Streda 1998. Black immediately

crushed his adversary's pawns, won back some material, and took firm control of the initiative.

3) It is harder for Black to prove his case in the event of 10.f3, though 10...e5 11.♘ge2 ♘d7 12.d3 ♖c8 13.♕g4 h5 14.♕h3 ♗c5 is acceptable for him.

9. ♕b5xc4 e7-e5
10. ♘g1-f3 ♗f8-e7



When commenting on his win against Milner-Barry (England 1974), Cenek Kottnauer, the Czech-English master, analyzed the resulting position in detail. Not all of his variations hold up against engine analysis, but his general conclusion was correct – Black does have tangible compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

11. 0-0 ...

It makes sense to start with 11.d3!? because Black has not created any direct threats to the white king. However, e5-e4 does not have the same punch as it does in Kottnauer's variation of 11.0-0 ♗e6 12.♕e4 f5 13.♕e2 e4 14.d3 ef! 15.♕xe6 ♘d4), and White can probably consolidate his position quite well. For example, 11...0-0 12.0-0 ♗e6 13.♕e4 f5 14.♕e2 ♗f6 15.♗f4 ♘d4 16.♘xd4 ♕xd4 17.♗d2 ♖ac8 18.♕e3 a6 19.♖ac1 ♕d6 20.♕g3 g6 21.♔h1 ♖fe8 22.♖cd1 ♕b6 23.♖b1 Krivolapov – Chetverik, Gyongyos 1994, and the players' armies have not come into contact yet, which should benefit White.

11. ... ♗c8-e6
12. ♕c4-e2 ...

Let us take a look at how the encounter between Yandemirov – Chetverik (Budapest 1993) unfolded: 12.♕b5 ♕d6!? 13.♕xb7 ♖b8 14.♕a6 ♗g4 15.♘e1 ♖b6 16.♕d3 ♘d4 17.f3 ♗c8 18.♕e3 f5 19.d3 0-0 20.♘e2 f4 21.♕d2 ♘f5 22.♕a5 ♖f6 23.♗d2 ♖a6 24.♕b5 ♗d7 25.♕c4+ ♗e6 26.♕b5 ♗d7 with a draw by repetition. The computer claims White has an overwhelming advantage, which seems to contradict the logic of the position. It is unclear what White can actually do with his two extra pawns. Note that if 13.♘e4 ♕d5 14.♕xd5 ♗xd5 15.d3 f5 16.c4 fe 17.cd ef 18.dc bc 19.♖e1 0-0-0 20.♖xe5 ♖xd3 then the position looks drawn.

12. ... ♗e6-g4
13. ♕e2-e3 ...

In the aforementioned game Milner-Barry – Kottnauer Black converted the advantage he gained after 13.♕e4 f5 14.♕d5? ♕xd5

15.♘xd5 ♗xf3 16.gf ♖d8 17.♘xe7 ♔xe7 18.d3 ♔f6. Despite being a pawn up, White should seek his chances in the middlegame!

13. ... ♘c6-d4

14. ♘f3xd4 ...

In the 14.♘e1 f6 15.♔h1 ♕d7 16.f3 ♗f5 17.♘e4 variation White's advantage is questionable, despite having a strong, centralized knight.

14. ... e5xd4

15. ♕e3-e4 ...

If 15.♕e5 0-0 16.♘d5 ♗c5 17.b4 ♖e8 18.♘f6+ ♕xf6 19.♕xf6 gf 20.bc ♖ac8 21.♗a3 ♖e2 then it would be silly for White to think about winning.

15. ... d4xc3

If 15...♕d7?! 16.♘b5 ♖d8 17.♖e1 Ambrus – Chetverik, Kecskemet 1998, then White has a real advantage.

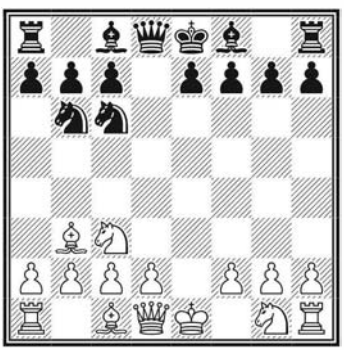
16. ♕e4xg4 c3xd2

At this point Kottnauer's analysis tapers off, ending with '–+', which was probably based on a mechanical calculation of the remaining pieces' value. Actually, chances are roughly equal in this complex position: 17.♗xd2 ♕xd2 18.♖ad1 ♕g5 19.♕d7+ ♔f8 20.♕xb7.

So, we have rehabilitated 5... c5 and placed this line among the other respectable continuations. Black has sufficient counterplay to account for the sacrificed pawn.

Chapter 16. 5.♗c4 ♘b6 6.♗b3 ♘c6

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♘b1-c3 d7-d5
3. e4xd5 ♘f6xd5
4. ♗f1-c4 ♘d5-b6
5. ♗c4-b3 ♘b8-c6



This rules out any tactical complications, giving this game a more positional flavor and making this variation rather popular, primarily among amateurs.

6. ♘g1-f3 ...

As usual, it is useful to meet ♘e2 with e7-e5. After 6.♘ge2 e5 7.0-0 a5 8.a3 ♗c5 9.d3 0-0 Black gains a space advantage and lays the groundwork for active continuations. We shall see 6.♕f3 in Game 18.

6. ... ♗c8-f5

Caution! 6...♗g4?? fails to 7.♗xf7+!. This warning cannot

be unnecessary because 43 people have fallen victims to this little trap! Although 18 of them were graciously pardoned.

Be careful again! If 6...e5?! 7.d3 ♗g4 8.h3 ♗h5? then Legal's idea comes into play (9.♘xe5!). Rozentalis routed Mikenas (Vilinus 1981), like they used to in the good old days: 9...♗xd1 10.♗xf7+ ♔e7 11.♗g5+ ♔d6 12.♘e4+ ♔xe5 13.f4+ ♔d4 14.♖xd1 ♘b4 15.c3+! ♔e3 16.0-0! ♘xd3 17.♘g3!. Overall, 6...e5 is dubious because the pawn comes under fire, and the b3-bishop becomes more potent. 6...e6, a more modest pawn move, has neither of these drawbacks. But why not liberate the bishop first?!

7. 0-0 e7-e6

8. d2-d4 ...

In Foldi – Krizsany (Sarospatak 1994) White opted for 8.d3, supporting the knight with his pawn. After 8...♗e7 9.♘e4 0-0 10.♗e3 ♘a5 11.♕e2 c6 12.♘g3 ♗g6 13.♘e5 ♗f6 14.♘xg6 hg 15.c3 ♘xb3 16.ab White's advantage is minimal, while if Black plays 10... h6 (to tuck the bishop away on h7) then the position is dead even.

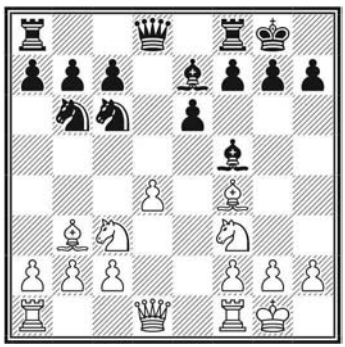
8. ... ♗f8-e7

9. ♗c1-f4 ...

9.♕e2 has been played, since accepting the sacrifice puts c7 in danger (9...♘xd4 10.♘xd4 ♕xd4 11.♘b5). In Antonio – Nolte (Philippines 2009) play followed: 9...0-0 10.♖d1 ♘a5 11.h3 a6 12.♘e4 ♖c8 13.♗d2 ♘xb3 14.ab ♕d5 15.♘c3 ♕d6 16.♖ac1 ♘d7 17.♘e4 ♕b6 18.♘g3 ♗g6 19.h4 h6 20.d5 e5 21.♗c3 (21.♘xe5? ♘xe5 22.♕xe5 ♗f6 23.♕e2 ♗xb2 24.♗e3 ♕f6 25.♖b1 ♖fe8 helps Black to activate his pieces quickly) 21...♗d6 22.♘d2 ♖ce8 23.♘c4 ♕c5 – chances are roughly equal.

Taimanov made an immediate break in the center against Tseshkovsky (Moscow 1976): 9.d5 ed 10.♘xd5 ♘xd5 11.♗xd5 0-0 12.c3 ♘a5 (12...♕d7!?) 13.a3 c6 14.♗a2 ♕xd1 15.♖xd1 ♗e6 16.♗xe6 fe 17.♗g5 ♖xf3 18.♗xe7 ♖f7 19.♗d8 ♘b3 20.♖ab1 ♘c5, and Black drew easily.

9. ... 0-0

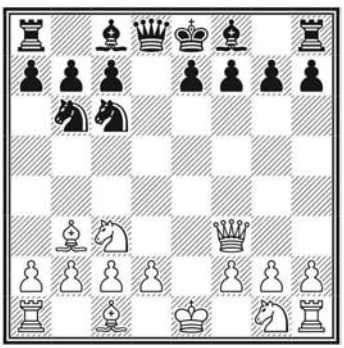


In this position the circumstances have changed, forcing White to reconsider d4-d5. If 10.d5 ed 11.♘xd5 ♘xd5 12.♗xd5 then White must watch out for 12...♗xc2!?. Without queens on the board, he has got nothing going for him — 11.♕xd5 ♕xd5 12.♗xd5 ♘b4 13.♗b3 ♗f6. In Prasca – Borges (Venezuela 1998) White shied away

from an immediate thrust, playing 10.♕d2 ♘a5 11.♘b5 ♘xb3 12.ab ♘d5 13.♗g3 a6 14.♘a3 c5 15.♘c4 ♖c8 and contenting himself with an equal position.

Game 18
G.Garcia – J.Nogueiras
Cienfuegos 1996

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**♘b1-c3**	**d7-d5**
3.	**e4xd5**	**♘f6xd5**
4.	**♗f1-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**♗c4-b3**	**♘b8-c6**
6.	**♕d1-f3**	**...**



Not many are brave enough to play this move because ♘b6-d4 is clearly in the cards. But f7 is under fire for now, so Black is forced to block in his queen's bishop.

6.	**...**	**e7-e6**
7.	**♘g1-e2**	**...**

There is no reason to give the black knight too much free reign. 7.♕g3 ♘d4 8.♘f3 ♘f5 9.♕e5 is dubious, mostly because of ♗c8-d7-c6, but 9...♗d6 10.♕e2 0-0 11.♘e4 ♘d5 12.♘xd6 ♕xd6 13.d4 a5 14.c3 a4 15.♗c2 a3 16.0-0 ab 17.♗xb2 b6 18.♖fe1 ♗a6 19.♕e4 ♘f6 20.♕e5 ♗c4 21.a4 ♖a5 22.♕xd6 ♘xd6 is not bad, Kotan – Grosar, Leipzig 2002. The restless queen is no longer on the stage, and the blockade depreciates White's bishop pair.

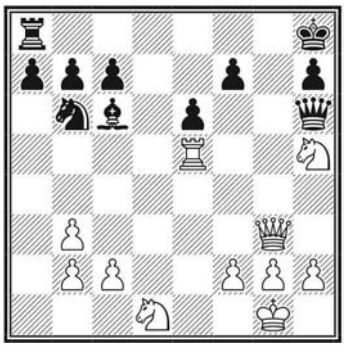
7.	**...**	**♗f8-e7**
8.	**d2-d3**	**0-0**
9.	**0-0**	**♗c8-d7**
10.	**d3-d4**	**♘c6-a5**
11.	**♗c1-f4**	**♗e7-d6**
12.	**♖f1-d1**	**♗d7-c6**
13.	**♕f3-g3**	**♘a5xb3**
14.	**a2xb3**	**♕d8-f6**
15.	**♖a1-a5**	**...**

After 15.♗xd6 cd 16.♕xd6 ♕g6 Black equalizes with a double attack.

15.	**...**	**♖f8-d8**
16.	**♗f4-e5**	**♗d6xe5**
17.	**♖a5xe5**	**♖d8-d7**
18.	**♘e2-f4?!**	**...**

Nogueiras appears to have made a hasty exchange on b3, and the queen's rook creeps onto the battlefield, once again. However, White has not made any progress at all (like in 18.f3 ♖ad8 19.♘e4 ♕h6), so he storms Black's fortress with abandon.

18.	**...**	**♖d7xd4**
19.	**♘f4-h5**	**♖d4xd1+**
20.	**♘c3xd1**	**♕f6-h6**
21.	**♘h5xg7**	**♔g8-h8**
22.	**♘g7-h5**	**...**



22. ... f7-f6?!

Despite being a strong GM, Nogueiras was unable to see that in the event of 22...♖g8! 23.♕c3 ♖xg2+ 24.♔f1 f6 25.♖xe6 ♖g6 the black king would be safe, while things would be looking gloomy for White's.

23. ♕g3-e3 ♕h6-g6

24. ♘h5-f4 ♕g6xc2

Nogueiras' queen vacates the kingside, and White is presented with an opportunity to draw by perpetual check. 24...♕g8 25.♖xe6 ♘d5 26.♕d4 ♖f8 is stronger — White would have had to give up his rook for the powerful bishop on c6.

25. ♕e3-d4! f6xe5

26. ♕d4xe5+ ♔h8-g8

27. ♕e5xe6+ ♔g8-f8

28. ♕e6-f6+ ♔f8-e8

29. ♕f6-e6+

½ - ½

5...♘c6 is not as energetic as 5...c5, although it has proved to be durable. Nevertheless, it seems as though pushing for an exchange with ♘c6-a5xb3 does not automatically equalize, and it is only good if Black has perfect timing.

We have a very strong, uncompromising opinion about 3.ed: White refuses to fight for an opening advantage, and he makes a transition to a middlegame without any trump cards. It is no surprise that strong players hardly ever opt for this variation.

Part 4. Various 3rd moves

Chapter 17. 3.g3

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. g2-g3 ...



White is not in a rush to take control of the center with his pawns. He is aiming to castle kingside as quickly as possible and choose a plan based on his opponent's setup. According to the Megabase, Max Euwe played this way against Oskam (Rotterdam 1924) well before his coronation as the king of the chess world.

3. ... d7-d6

Calm development, refraining from undermining the central pawn, is seen much less. Dzhumaev and Shabalov (Linares 2000) engaged in a challenging, roughly equal struggle: 3...c5 4.♗g2 e6 5.♘f3 ♘c6 6.0-0 ♗e7 7.♘c3 ♘xc3 8.bc b6 9.d4 ♗a6 10.♖e1 ♖c8 11.d5 ed 12.♕xd5 ♘a5 13.♗f4 ♗c4 14.♕e4 ♗e6 15.h4 h6 16.a4 ♕c7 17.♘d2 0-0. 8.dc, immediately opening up a direct route to the weakened d6-square, looks more promising.

4. e5xd6 c7xd6

Generally, this continuation generates more vibrant play than 4...ed (Game 19). But 4...♕xd6 is acceptable, unlike in the exchange variation. T.Petrosian – Nakamura (Gibraltar 2008) continued 5.♗g2 ♘c6 6.♘c3 ♘xc3 7.bc e5 8.d3 ♗e7 9.♘e2 ♗e6 10.c4 ♕d7 11.♖b1 0-0-0 12.0-0 ♗h3. T.Petrosian, not to be confused with the former world champion, realized that launching an attack without a light-squared bishop appears misguided, but 13.♗h1?! was an unsound sacrifice. 5...g6 6.♘e2 (6.♘f3 ♕e6+!) 6... ♗g7, followed by castling short, is another good plan.

5. ♗f1-g2 ♘d5-f6

In Stangl – Ye Rongguang (Beijing 1995) White masterfully exploited the knight retreat to b6: 5...♘b6 6.d4 g6 7.a4 a5 8.♘c3 ♗g7 9.♘ge2 0-0 10.b3 ♘c6 11.♗e3 ♗f5 12.♕d2 ♖e8 13.0-0 d5 14.h3 ♕d7 15.g4 ♗e6 16.♘f4 f6 17.♘d3 f5 18.♘c5 ♕c8 19.♘b5. Black is not in such a bad shape if 6...d5 7.♘f3 ♘c6 8.0-0 ♗g4 9.c3 e6, eventually bringing the b6-knight back to life.

6. d2-d4 g7-g6

After 6...d5 7.♘f3 ♘c6 8.0-0 ♗g4 9.h3 ♗xf3 10.♗xf3 e6 11.b3?! ♗e7 12.♗b2 0-0 13.♘d2 b5 14.c3 ♕b6 15.♗g2 ♖ac8 16.♘f3 ♖fd8 17.♕e2 a5 18.♖ac1 a4 19.♘e5 ♘a5 20.♕c2? (20.ba ba 21.♖b1 was necessary) 20...axb3 21.ab ♘d7 22.♘d3 b4! Tosic – Marinkovic, Budva 1996, White's position is almost critical. He got himself into trouble by sending his queen's bishop over to the flank, following his light-squared bishop's lead.

7. ♘g1-e2 ...

If 7.♘f3 then the players may take the following course: 7...♗g7 8.0-0 0-0 9.♖e1 ♕c7 10.b3 ♘c6 11.♗b2 ♗f5 12.a3 d5 13.♘bd2 ♖fd8 14.♖c1 ♖ac8 15.♘h4 ♗g4 16.f3 ♗e6 17.♗f1 ♕b6 18.c3 ♗h6 19.f4?! (Martinovsky – Miles, Chicago 1994) 19...g5 20.fg ♗xg5 21.♘g2 ♘e4 with a clear edge. By the way, the opening transposed into a line out of the Alekhine Defense, initially starting with 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 c5 3.e3 cd 4.ed g6 5.g3 ♗g7 6.♗g2 0-0 7.0-0 d6.

7. ... ♗f8-g7
8. 0-0 0-0
9. c2-c4 ♘b8-c6
10. ♘b1-c3 ...



Now we are in the English Opening territory: 1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 c5 3.g3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.e3 0-0 6.♘ge2 ♘c6 7.0-0 d6 8.d4 cd 9.ed. As was the case in the position from the previous commentary, the number of moves has just changed slightly.

10. ... ♗c8-f5

It is best for Black to shy away from open conflict in the center (10...e5 11.de de 12.♗g5 h6 13.♗xf6 ♕xf6 14.♘e4 ♕e6 15.♕a4 favors White), and focus on finding the best post for his queen's bishop. Sometimes it shifts to g4, looking to exchange itself for the knight, thereby taking control of the key d5-square. After 10...♗g4 11.h3 ♗xe2 12.♘xe2 d5 13.cd ♘xd5 14.♕b3 ♘b6 15.d5 ♘a5 16.♕b5 ♘ac4 17.♖b1 ♘d6 18.♕d3 ♖c8 19.♗f4 ♕d7 20.b3 ♕f5 21.♕xf5 gf 22.♗xd6 ed 23.♖fc1 ♖xc1+

24.♖xc1 ♖c8 25.♖xc8+ ♘xc8 Kasimdzhanov – Al-Modiahki, Guangzhou 2010, wide-sweeping simplifications quickly lead to a draw. It is best for White to follow Tomashevsky – Volokitin, Moscow 2004: 13.c5 b6 14.♖b1 a5 15.a3 e5 (a bit controversial) 16.de ♘xe5 17.cb ♕xb6 18.♗e3 ♕a6 19.♘f4 ♖ad8 20.♗d4 ♘e4 21.♖c1 with better chances.

Occasionally, Black prepares a queenside pawn storm involving b7-b5. In Rozentalis – Hjartarson (Tilburg 1994, rapid) 10...a6 11.b3 ♖b8 12.h3 ♗d7 13.d5 ♘a5 14.♘d4 (14.♗e3, not leaving the c3-knight unprotected, would have been more precise) 14...♕c8 15.♔h2 b5 16.♖b1 bc 17.b4 ♘b7 (17... ♗f5!? 18.♘xf5 ♕xf5, using the pin) 18.♗e3? ♘d8 19.♕d2 e5 20.♘de2 ♗f5 21.♖b2 h5 followed, and Black is a full pawn up. If 18.♘c6 ♗xc6 19.dc ♘d8 20.♕a4 then the position remains unclear.

11. h2-h3 ...

In Hort – Clarke (Kecskemet 1964) White proved that it is not essential to prevent an exchange of light-squared bishops. White mounted an attack with his few forces partially thanks to his space advantage: 11.b3 ♕d7 12.♗b2 ♗h3 13.d5 ♘b4 14.♕d2 ♗xg2 15.♔xg2 ♕f5 16.♖ad1 ♘e4 17.♘xe4 ♕xe4+ 18.f3 ♕c2 19.♗xg7 ♕xd2 20.♖xd2 ♔xg7 21.♘d4 a5 22.f4 ♘a6 23.f5 ♖fe8 24.g4.

11. ... h7-h5

Black must counteract 12.g4, which would win a piece after 11... ♕d7 and throw the bishop away to d7, in the event of 11...♕c8. A knight sacrifice on g4 does not look correct, although there is no full clarity.

12. ♗c1-e3 ...

Now the bishop is keeping its eye on d4, while it would not have been doing much of anything on g5. After 12.♗g5 ♕d7 13.♔h2 e5 14.d5 ♘d4 15.♘xd4 ed 16.♘b5 ♖fc8 17.♖c1 (Rogoff – Smejkal, Biel 1976) 17... d3 18.♕d2 a6 19.♘d4 ♖e8 20.♖fe1 b5 Black can count on stirring up some counterplay because the pawn on d3 cramps White.

12. ... ♕d8-c8
13. ♔g1-h2 ♘c6-b4
14. ♕d1-b3 ...

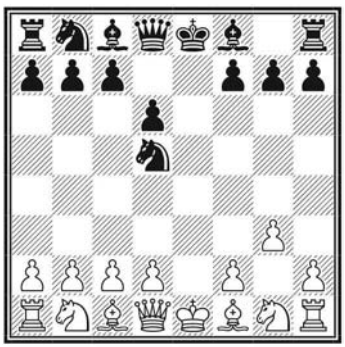
Protecting the knight with 14... a5 is insufficient because of 15.♖fc1 ♗d3 16.c5 dc 17.dc e5 18.a3 ♘c6 (Soylu – R.Bagirov, Baku 1997) 19.♖e1 ♖d8 20.♖ad1, and ♘c3-a4 deprives Black of the open file. It is best to exchange off the bishop, thereby weakening the white king's domicile: 14...♘c2 15.♖ac1 ♘xe3 16.fe ♖b8 17.♘f4 ♗e6 18.♘xe6 ♕xe6 19.♘e2 ♕d7 20.♕a3 a6 21.b4 ♖bc8 22.♘f4 e6 23.♕b3 ♕c7 24.a4 g5 25.♘d3 h4, passing into the counterattack, Frog – Iljushin, Moscow 1999.

Game 19
E.Rozentalis – M.Adams
Germany 1998

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. g2-g3 ...

Eduardas Rozentalis would eagerly fianchetto his bishop, quite successfully. Nevertheless, he apparently did not believe that 3.g3 refutes 1...♘f6 because in the 21st century he became a fervent adept of the Alekhine Defense as Black.

3. ... d7-d6
4. e5xd6 e7xd6



5. ♗f1-g2 ♘d5-f6

It is best to redirect the knight to a more natural-looking square away from b6, where it looks clumsy, as soon as the opportunity arises. After 5...♘b6 6.d4 ♗e7 7.♘f3 (7.♘e2!?) 7...0-0 8.0-0 ♗g4 9.h3 ♗h5 10.♘c3 ♘8d7 11.♘e2 ♗g6 12.♖e1 ♘f6 13.♗g5 h6 14.♗xf6 ♗xf6 15.♘f4 ♗h7 16.c3 ♕d7 17.♘d2 c6 18.♕f3 ♖ae8 19.h4 d5 Wang Li – Megaranto, Kuala Lumpur 2008, Black has a decent position, but the knight is worse than all of his other pieces.

6. d2-d4 ♗f8-e7

6...d5, looking to deploy the bishop on a more active square, is worth considering seriously. In van Mil – Luther (Germany 2002) 6... d5 7.♘f3 ♗d6 8.0-0 0-0 9.♘bd2 c6 10.b3 ♖e8 11.♗b2 ♗f5 12.h3 h6 13.♘e5 ♘bd7 14.♖e1 ♕c7 15.f4 ♗h7 16.♖c1 ♖ad8 17.a3 ♘e4 18.c4 ♘xd2 19.cd ♘b1! 20.b4 ♘b8! followed. Luther's knights are laughable, but he has better chances. Naturally, the double fianchetto is the pinnacle of modest opening play.

7. ♘g1-f3 ...

Rozentalis – Miles (New York 1997) continued 7.c4 d5 8.c5?! (an exchange on d5 would have equalized) 8...0-0 9.♘e2 b6 10.cb ab 11.0-0 ♘e4 12.f3 ♘d6 13.♘bc3 c6 14.♗f4 ♖e8 15.b3 ♘d7 (Cox recommended 15...♘f5) 16.♕d2 ♘f8 17.♖ae1 ♘g6 18.♗xd6 ♗xd6 19.f4 ♗f5. Black dictates the terms, and it is not surprising that the Lithuanian GM shied away from this line first.

7. ... 0-0
8. 0-0 d6-d5

If 8...♗g4 9.h3 ♗h5, then 10.♖e1, c2-c4 and ♕d1-b3, throwing a punch at the hanging pawn. Adams chose a more solid continuation.

9. ♘f3-e5 c7-c6
10. ♘b1-c3 ♘b8-d7

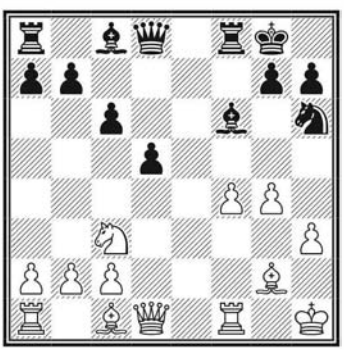
11. f2-f4 ♘d7xe5

Rozentalis had seen this position before, too! White arrived at it via a different move order: 6...d5 7.♘f3 ♗e7 8.0-0 0-0 9.♘e5 ♘bd7 10.♘c3 c6 11.f4 ♘xe5, and then 12.fe ♘e8 13.♕h5 f5 14.♘e2 ♘c7 15.c3 ♘e6 16.h4 ♖f7 17.♘f4 ♘xf4 18.♗xf4 ♗e6 Rozentalis – Appel, Germany 1994. White maintained a long-lasting advantage (a modest one at that) thanks to his protected passed pawn. 13...♕b6 14.♘e2 g6 15.♕h6 f6 makes the queen coming out to h5 look questionable, so 13.♕d3 is more cautious. Rozentalis decides to mix things up again, but his timing is off!

12. d4xe5?! ♘f6-g4!
13. ♔g1-h1 f7-f6
14. h2-h3 ♘g4-h6
15. e5xf6 ♗e7xf6

The white king is too vulnerable, and other pieces are restricted by pawns (both his own and his opponent's). Nevertheless, 16.♘e2 would have kept White in the game (Adams).

16. g3-g4? ...



16. ... ♗f6xc3!
17. b2xc3 ♗c8xg4!
18. h3xg4 ♕d8-h4+
19. ♔h1-g1 ♘h6xg4
20. ♖f1-f3 ♖a8-e8
21. ♗c1-d2 ♖e8-e4?!

It is hard to see any holes in Black's attack when casually going over this game, but the omniscient Houdini found one. 21...♕h2+ 22.♔f1 ♖e4 23.♖b1 ♕h4 24.♗e1 ♕h6 25.♗d2 ♘h2+ 26.♔g1 ♘xf3+ 27.♗xf3 ♖e7 was practically winning.

22. f4-f5?! ...

22.♖h3 should not be losing for White, which one can see from the following rough variation: 22...♕f2+ 23.♔h1 ♖e2 24.♗f1 ♖xd2 25.♕xg4 ♖xf4 26.♕e6+ ♖f7 27.♕e8+ ♖f8 28.♕e1. Adams makes one clarification: 24...♖fe8 25.♗xe2 ♖xe2 26.♕g1 ♕xg1+ 27.♔xg1 ♖xd2, which is not foolproof either.

22. ... ♖f8-e8!
23. f5-f6 g7xf6
24. ♗g2-h3? ...

After 24.♖h3 ♕f2+ 25.♔h1 ♖e2 26.♗f1 ♔h8 (so as not to lose the g4-knight with check after 27... ♖xd2) 27.♗xe2 ♖xe2 28.♕g1 ♕f5! Black's threats decide the game.

24. ... ♖e4-e2
0-1

3.g3 does not offer White any sort of advantage. All three captures in reply to 4.e4 are good. Surely, the fianchetto is doomed to remain on the margin of chess theory.

Chapter 18. 3.♗c4

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. ♗f1-c4 ...



White aims to drive away the enemy knight without damaging his pawn structure (unlike with 3.♘c3). Savielly Tartakower was very fond of this bishop move, although it never proved to be particularly effective.

3. ... ♘d5-b6

Black can shy away from counterattacking by choosing 3...c6 or 3...e6. These moves almost always lead to other, much less popular, lines in the Alekhine Defense.

4. ♗c4-b3 ...

After 4.♗e2 Colle won the battle for e5 against E.Steiner (Budapest 1926), simply put, he won a pawn: 4...d6 5.f4 ♘c6 6.♘f3 de 7.fe ♘d4 8.0-0 ♘xf3+ 9.♗xf3 ♕d4+ 10.♔h1 ♕xe5 11.d4 ♕d6. White overtook his adversary relatively quickly, but there does not appear to be obvious compensation for the damage.

The position arising after 4...c5 5.♘f3 ♘c6 generally comes out of the Rubinstein variation (1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.e5 ♘d5 4.♗c4 ♘b6 5.♗e2 ♘c6), We can add 6.c3, arriving at the 1.e4 c5 2.c3 ♘f6 3.e5 ♘d5 4.♘f3 ♘c6 5.♗c4 ♘b6 6.♗e2 line (which we had already covered). In both cases ♗f1-c4-e2 does not pay off for White whatsoever.

4. ... c7-c5

The 4...d6 and 4...d5 lines intersect if a pawn capture is made. If 5.ed ed 6.d4 ♗e7 7.♘f3 0-0 8.0-0 c5 9.c3 ♗g4 10.♗e3 ♘c6 11.dc (11.♖e1 cd 12.cd d5 slightly immobilizes White's bishops) 11...dxc5 12.♘bd2 ♘d5 13.♗xd5 ♕xd5 14.♕b3 ♕d7 15.♖ad1 ♘a5 16.♕a3 ♕c7 17.b3 ♖fe8 18.h3 ♗h5 19.♕a4 b6 20.♗f4 ♕c6 21.♕xc6 ♘xc6 Kristovic – Zelcic, Makarska 1995, then the position is equal and utterly boring. If Black wants a more vibrant game, then he should elect 5...cd.

GM Kiril Georgiev, whose rating exceeded that of Kobese's by more than 300 points, made an irreparable mistake in their game (Istanbul 2012): 4...d6 5.♘f3 ♘c6 6.♕e2 ♗f5 7.a4 e6 8.a5 ♘d7 9.a6 b6 10.♗a4 ♘cxe5 11.♘xe5 de 12.♕xe5 ♗xc2 13.♗c6 ♗f5?? 14.♘c3 f6 15.♕e2 ♔f7 16.d4 ♖c8 17.0-0. Black did not bother himself to exchange the knight on b1, and

now it has invaded b5, which winds up being decisive.

Black is completely content with the closed 'French' pawn chains arising after 4...d5 5.d4 ♗f5 6.♘e2 e6 because the queen's bishop now roams free. For instance, 7.♘g3 ♗g6 8.h4 h6 9.h5 ♗h7 10.c3 c5 11.0-0 ♘c6 12.♕g4 (Zorman – V.Bagirov, Berlin 1995) 12...♖c8 13.♗e3 cd 14.♗xd4 ♘c4 15.♗xc4 dc, or 7.♗e3 c5! 8.dc ♘6d7 9.♘d4 ♗g6 10.♗a4 ♗xc5 11.c3 0-0 12.0-0 (Vargic – Rogulj, Djakovo 2011) 12...♕b6 13.b4 ♗xd4 14.♗xd4 ♕c7 15.f4 ♘c6.

5. d2-d3 ...

It is useful to make up one's mind first regarding 5.d3 or 5.c3 (transposing to the 1.e4 c5 2.c3 ♘f6 3.e5 ♘d5 4.♗c4 ♘b6 5.♗b3 variation). Yates – Rubinstein (Dresden 1926) should probably convince you that 5.♕e2 is a rigid continuation that White should avoid: 5...♘c6 6.♘f3 d5 7.ed e6 8.♘c3 ♗xd6 9.♘e4 ♗e7 10.d3 ♘d5 11.0-0 0-0 12.♗d2 b6 13.♖ad1 ♗b7 14.♖fe1 ♕d7 15.♗c1 ♖ad8 16.♘g3 ♖fe8 17.♕e4 ♘f6 18.♕h4 ♘d4 19.♘e5 ♕c7 20.♘h5 ♘xh5 21.♕xh5 ♗d6 22.♘g4 ♘xb3 23.ab f5 24.♘e3 ♕c6, and White's attack winds up being harmless. 14...♘d4 15.♘xd4 cd may be more precise for Black.

5. ... ♘b8-c6

In Dzhumaev – Mamedyarov (Dubai 2004) Black decided against developing his knight right away: 5...d5 6.ed e6 7.♕g4 h5 8.♕e2 (8.♕g3!? h4 9.♕g4 could have kept the bishop on the back rank) 8...♘c6 9.♘f3 ♗xd6 10.♘c3 ♗d7 11.♗e3 ♘a5 12.♘e4 ♕c7 13.♘xd6+ ♕xd6 14.♘g5 ♗c6 15.♗xe6!? fe 16.♗d2 ♗xg2 17.♖g1. The game delved into mind-boggling complications, and Black should have gone for 17... ♗d5 18.♗xa5 ♕xh2 19.0-0-0 0-0 to keep up.

6. ♘g1-f3 ...

6.f4 is a pseudo-active move, especially if White then cedes the center: 6...d5 7.ed ♕xd6 8.♗e3 ♘d5 9.♕f3 ♘xe3 (9...e6, hanging onto his powerful stallion, is no worse) 10.♕xe3 g6 11.♘e2 ♗g7 12.♘bc3 b6 13.♘e4 ♕c7 14.c3 0-0 15.h3 a5 16.a4 e6 17.g4 ♗a6, zeroing in on White's weak pawn, Panko – Chetverik, Bardejov 2004.

6. ... d7-d5

7. e5xd6 e7-e6

The pawn passes by its counterpart, keeping it alive for just a second. Keep this finesse, typical for the Alekhine Defense, in mind. This is how Black can most effectively mobilize his kingside forces.

However, immediate captures do not deserve any criticism either. After 7...ed 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.c3 ♗g4 10.d4 cd 11.cd 0-0 12.♘c3 ♗f6 13.♗e3 ♖c8 14.h3 ♗h5 15.♗c2 ♗g6 16.♗xg6 hg 17.♖c1 d5 18.♗f4 ♕d7 19.♖e1 ♖fd8 the players have reached a calm and equal position in Ashley – Yermolinsky, Saint Martin 1993. Or 7...♕xd6 8.♘c3

♗f5 9.0-0 e6 10.a4 ♗e7 11.a5 ♘d5 12.a6 b6 13.♘b5 ♕d8 14.d4 0-0 15.♘e5 ♘xe5 16.de ♘b4 17.♗d2 ♕d7 18.♘d6 ♗xd6 19.ed (19.♗xb4 cb 20.♕xd6 ♕xd6 21.ed is a more solid move order) 19...♕xd6 20.♗xb4 ♕xd1 21.♖fxd1 cb 22.♖d7 ♖fc8 23.♖ad1 g5 24.♖1d2, and the active rooks hardly make up for the pawn, A.Sokolov – Ekstroem, Switzerland 2011.

8. ♘b1-c3 ...

If 8.♗g5 then Black can just capture with the queen or weaken his position ever so slightly with 8... f6 9.♗e3 ♗xd6 10.♘c3 0-0, which is just fine.

8. ... ♗f8xd6

9. ♘c3-e4 ...

In Nikitin – Vasiukov (Suzdal 2011, rapid) Black's play was exemplary: 9.♗g5 ♗e7 10.♗xe7 ♕xe7 11.0-0 0-0 12.♖e1 ♖d8 13.♕e2 ♗d7 14.♖ad1 ♗e8 15.♘e4 a5 16.a3 a4 17.♗a2 ♘d4 18.♘xd4 cd 19.♕d2 (he should have checked shifting the queen to e5 via h5) 19...h6 20.♘g3 ♗c6 21.♖e5 ♘d7 22.♖a5 ♖xa5 23.♕xa5 ♖c8 with more promising position.

9. ... ♗d6-e7

10. 0-0 ...

Sergeant and Alekhine (Hastings 1926) took the gloves off right away: 10.c3 0-0 11.♗e3 ♘d5 12.♗xc5 ♘f4 13.0-0 ♗xc5 14.♘xc5 b6 15.♘e4 ♘xd3?! (capturing with the queen would have maintained equality) 16.♕c2 ♘f4?! (Black should have retreated to g5) 17.♖fd1 ♕c7 18.♘d6 ♘g6. Now 19.♘g5 ♘ce5 20.♖d4! should have produced some winning sacrifice, but the world-champion-to-be got off easy.

10. ... 0-0

11. ♗c1-e3 ♘b6-d7

Yates – Kmoch (Semmering 1926) continued 11...♘d4 12.c3 ♘xb3 13.♕xb3 ♕c7 14.♖ad1 ♗d7 15.♕a3 ♗a4 16.b3 ♗c6 17.♗xc5 ♗xe4 18.♗xe7 ♗xf3 19.gf ♖fe8 20.♗c5 ♘d7 21.♗d4 e5 22.♗e3 ♖e6, taking over the initiative. However, after 12.♗xd4 cd 13.♖e1 Black would have had a tough time trying to develop his queenside.

12. d3-d4 ...

12.c3, looking to place a pawn on d4, is a viable alternative. A rapid onslaught brought Palasto success in her game against Tagnon (Buenos Aires 1978): 12...b6 13.♘fg5 ♘de5?! 14.d4 cd 16.cd ♘g6?! 16.♕h5 h6 17.♘xf7! ♔xf7 18.d5!. Palasto, a relatively unknown Finnish female player, set the game on fire! Black should have gone for 13...♘db8, ducking away from the head-on attack, instead of 13...♘de5?!.

12. ... c5xd4

In Vajda – Kmoch (Budapest 1926) Black again came out of the opening stage looking quite good: 12...b6?! 13.dc ♘xc5 14.♘xc5 ♗xc5 15.♗xc5 bc 16.♗a4 ♕b6 17.♕d6 ♘d4 18.♕xb6 ab 19.♘xd4 ♖xa4 20.♘f3, draw. Nevertheless, the bishop fianchetto seems premature because of 13.d5.

13. ♘f3xd4 ♕d8-c7

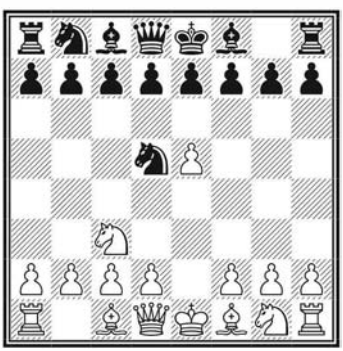


After 14.f4 ♘c5 15.♘xc6 ♕xc6 16.♘xc5 ♗xc5 17.♗xc5 ♕xc5+ 18.♔h1 b6 19.♕f3 ♗d7 in Lukacs – Chetverik, Harkany 1990, Black wrapped up his development and obtained a slight advantage. White should have gone for 14.c3, solidifying his centralized knight.

The bishop sortie to c4 is by no means a hot line. White too early commits a piece that could have found a more desirable square. One can easily see that Black has a wide range of active plans, equalizing chances.

Chapter 19. Various replies to 3.♘c3

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. ♘b1-c3 ...



Saemisch – Alekhine (Budapest 1921) provides a meaningful historical context for this move. Chess stars such as Lasker, Tarrasch, and Bogoljubow had tried 3.♘c3, too, but no high-profile players grew attached to this early knight move. It is not played often, but it has not disappeared from the modern chess scene. It is a natural developing move. The knight attacks Black's best (and only developed) piece, and White can compensate for his damaged pawn structure by using the open files and diagonals.

3...♘xc3 is considered in Chapters 20 and 21, and we shall focus on different moves for now.

3. ... e7-e6

Let us consider 3...c6. After 4.♗c4 d6 5.♕f3 e6 6.ed ♗xd6 7.♘ge2 0-0 8.d4 b5 9.♘xd5 cd!? 10.♗d3 (10.♗xb5?! ♕a5+ 11.♘c3 ♗b4 12.♗e2 ♘c6 is just bad) 10...♘c6 11.c3 ♖b8 12.♗f4 ♗xf4 13.♕xf4 b4

14.0-0 bc 15.bc ♖b6 16.♖fb1 ♗a6 17.♗xa6 ♖xa6 in Balin – Stocek, Czech Republic 2009, Black took over the initiative on the queenside (White's accomplishments on the kingside are pale in comparison) by playing active chess.

In the majority of cases, 3...c6 leads to 4.♘xd5 cd 5.d4 d6. The doubled pawns should not rattle Black, since they exert pressure over key squares in the center, shielding Black from any unpleasant surprises. After 6.f4 ♗f5 7.♗d3 ♗xd3 8.♕xd3 e6 9.♘f3 ♘c6 10.0-0 ♗e7 11.c3 g6 12.♗e3 a6 13.♖ae1 ♕a5 14.a3 ♕b5 15.♕c2 (Nagy – Chetverik, Szombathely 2005) 15...♘a5 16.a4 ♕b3 17.♕xb3 ♘xb3 the exchange of queens neutralizes White's initiative. Luch – V.Sergeev (Trinec 2001) was a rather typical game: 6.ed ♕xd6 7.♗d3 ♘c6 8.c3 g6 9.♘e2 ♗f5 10.♗f4 ♕d7 11. 0-0 ♗g7 12.♖e1 0-0 13.♗xf5 ♕xf5 14.♕d2 ♘a5 15.♘g3 ♕d7 16.b3 ♖ac8 17.♖ac1 ♖fe8 18.♘f1 b5 19.♗h6 ♗f6 20.♘e3 ♘c6, and each side had roughly equal chances.

The knight's retreat back to b6 does not look particularly impressive because it is almost always poorly placed on that square. After 3...♘b6 4.d4 d6 5.ed now 5...cxd6 should be discarded. If 6.a4!? a5 7.d5 then a piece coming to b5 will not be going anywhere anytime soon. 6.♘f3 g6 (6...♗g4 7.h3 ♗xf3 8.♕xf3 d5 9.a4, and then a4-a5-a6) 7.♗e3 ♗g7 8.♕d2 d5 9.♗h6 ♗f6 10.♕f4 a6 11.0-0-0 ♘c6 12.g4 Kos – Z.Varga, Paks 2000, favors White, too, and Black has to settle for 12...♕d6. In the 5...ed 6.♘f3 ♗g4 7.h3 ♗xf3 8.♕xf3 variation Black has to protect b7 awkwardly. He should proceed with 6...♗e7 7.♗d3 0-0 8.0-0 ♖e8 9.♖e1 ♗d7, defending passively on the back three ranks.

4. ♘c3xd5 ...

In Moura – Podgaets (Graz 1972) 4.♗c4 allowed Black to obtain a slight edge: 4...♘xc3 5.dc d5 6.♗d3 ♘c6 7.♘f3 h6 8.h4 ♘a5 9.♗f4 c5 10.♕d2 ♗d7 11.♖d1 ♕b6 12.♕c1 0-0-0 13.0-0 ♗c6. One can meet 4.♘e4 with the approximate variation 4...d6 5.d4 de 6.de ♗d7 7.♗g5 ♕c8 8.a3 h6 9.♗h4 ♗c6. Black is lacking space, but his queen's bishop is out on the town and he is looking for a way to get his other pieces in the game. Chances are roughly equal.

If 4.d4 ♘xc3 5.bc d5 6.♘f3 c5 7.♗d3 c4 8.♗e2 ♗e7 9.h4 h6 10.h5 ♘c6 11.♖h3 ♕a5 12.♗d2 ♗d7 13.♖g3 ♗f8 then it is unclear how White will compensate for his damaged pawn structure, Baklan – Danneel, Ghent 2003. While 4.♘f3 d6 5.d4 ♘xc3 6.bc loses a tempo due to d6-d5, and Black should opt for an exchange on e5: 6...de 7.♘xe5 ♘d7 8.♗f4 ♗e7 (but not 8...c5? 9.♗b5 cd 10.♕f3! with a powerful initiative) 9.♗d3 ♘xe5 10.♗xe5 ♗f6 11.♕e2 ♗d7 12. 0-0 ♗c6 13.f4 0-0 14.♗xf6 ♕xf6 15.♖ae1 g6 16.♕f2 ♖ad8 17.♖e5

♖d5 18.♕e3 ♖fd8 Andersson – Kraidman, Siegen 1970, and Black seems to be equalizing gradually.

4. ... e6xd5

5. d2-d4 ...

Game 20, a real masterpiece, covers 5.♕f3.

5. ... d7-d6

6. ♘g1-f3 ...

After 6.f4 Black obtains a comfortable position: 6...de 7.de ♗c5 8.♘f3 ♘c6 9.♗d3 0-0 10.♕e2 f6 11.♗e3 ♗xe3 12.♕xe3 fe 13.fe ♗g4 14.0-0 ♕e7 Macak – Baburin, England 2006. In E.Sveshnikov – Starcevs (Riga 2013) there followed 6.♗f4 de 7.de c5 8.c3 ♘c6 9.♘f3 ♗e7 10.♗d3 ♗e6 11.♕e2 c4 12.♗c2 d4 13.♗e4 d3 14.♕e3 h6 15.b3 cb?! 16.ab ♗xb3 17.♗xd3, and the pawn exchange clearly favored White. 15...g5 16.♗g3 ♕b6 17.♖b1 cb 18.ab ♖d8, holding onto his immobilizing pawn, is stronger.

6. ... ♘b8-c6

The 6...♗g4 7.♗e2 ♗xf3 8.♗xf3 de 9.de c6 variation, despite being engine-approved, has not been played by Black in a tournament game. Most likely nobody was too enthusiastic about giving up the bishop pair just because. 7. ♗f1-b5 ...

Pinning the knight seems to be the most principled reply. There were not any fireworks in the source game Saemisch – Alekhine (Budapest 1921), and the players agreed a truce after numerous exchanges: 7.♗e2 ♗e7 8.♗f4 0-0 9.0-0 f6 10.ed ♗xd6 11.♕d2 ♗g4 12.♖fe1 ♖e8 13.c3 ♘e7 14.♗xd6 ♕xd6 15.♘h4 ♗d7 16.g3 ♘f5 17.♘xf5 ♗xf5 18.f3 ♖e6 19.♗f1 ♖ae8 20.♔f2 ♔f7 21.♖xe6 ♕xe6 22.♖e1 ♕xe1+ 23.♕xe1 ♖xe1 24.♔xe1. The game closely resembles the exchange variation in the French Defense.

In Gonzales – Nogueiras (Santa Clara 2004) White achieved a clear advantage after 7.c3 ♗e7 8.♗d3 a6 9.h3 ♗e6 10.♗f4 g5 11.♗g3 ♕d7 12.ed cd 13.h4 gh 14.♗xh4 0-0-0 15.♕d2 ♖dg8 16.♖h2 ♖g4 17.0-0-0 h5 18.♖dh1 ♗xh4 19.♘xh4. He is planning g2-g3 and then ♘h4-g2-f4, poking at his opponent's weaknesses. Black voluntarily made mincemeat of his position; he should prefer 10...de 11.♘xe5 ♘xe5 12.♗xe5 ♗d6.

7. ... ♗c8-d7

If 7...♗e7 8.♗xc6+ bc 9.0-0 0-0 10.h3 ♗f5 11.♖e1 ♖e8 then Black's bishop pair may be able to make up for his structural deficiencies.

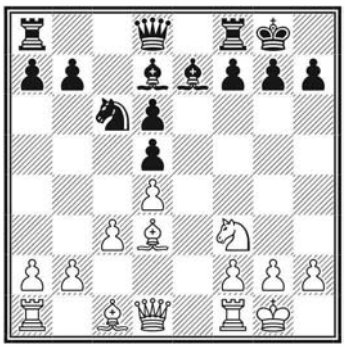
8. 0-0 ...

If 8.♕e2!? de 9.♗xc6 ♗xc6 10.♘xe5 ♕e7 11.♘xc6 bc 12.♕xe7+ ♗xe7 13.♗e3 ♖b8 14.0-0-0 ♗d6 15.♖he1 ♔d7 Bunk – Velicka, Regensburg 1996, then a boring draw can be predicted. Naturally, White exchanged off his powerful stallion for Black's pathetic bishop much too early.

8. ... ♗f8-e7

9. e5xd6 c7xd6

10. c2-c3 0-0
11. ♗b5-d3 ...



At the 1972 Skopje Olympiad, Liljedahl, a Swedish master, defended this position two times. After 11...♘a5 12.♖e1 ♖e8 13.♗f4 g6 14.h3 ♖c8 15.♖e2 ♕b6 16.♕f1 ♗f8 17.♖ae1 f6 18.♗c1 ♖xe2 19.♖xe2 ♖e8 20.♖xe8 ♗xe8 21.♕e2 ♕d8 22.♘h2 ♕e7 23.♘g4 f5 24.♘f6+ ♕xf6 25.♕xe8 Filipowicz had obtained an advantage, while after 11...♗e6 12.♖e1 ♗f6 13.♗f4 ♖e8 14.h3 ♕d7 15.♖e3 g6 16.♕e2 ♖e7 17.♖e1 Radulov had better chances. So, it is useful to pay attention to 7...♗e7.

Game 20
T.Oral – J.Pribyl
Pardubice 2002

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. ♘b1-c3 e7-e6
4. ♘c3xd5 e6xd5
5. ♕d1-f3 ...



White primarily wants to impede Black's kingside development by eventually attacking g7 (with ♕f3-g3). Oral executed this idea fabulously.

5. ... c7-c6
6. d2-d4 ...

White can boost his central pawn with his neighbor: 6.♕g3 d6 7.f4. Then 7...♗f5 8.c3 ♘d7 9.♘f3 ♗e4!? 10.d4 f6 is possible, and e5 starts to unravel. Trying to make a break from the left does not give White an edge either: 6.c4 d6 7.cd de 8.♗c4 ♕f6.

6. ... d7-d6
7. ♗f1-d3 ...

White has to keep a close eye on his opponent's possible counterplay. 7.♕g3 de 8.de ♘a6 9.c3 ♘c5 10.♘f3?! ♘e4 11.♕f4 ♗c5 12.♗e3 ♕b6 13.♗d3 (Aalbersberg – Solozhenkin, Sitges 1993) 13... ♗xe3 14.fe ♘c5 15.0-0-0 ♘e6, destroying the e3-pawn without getting punished, is instructive. As one can see, the white queen is on the hunt and being hunted!

7. ... d6xe5
8. d4xe5 ♗c8-e6
9. ♕f3-g3 ♘b8-a6

9...c5, followed by ♘b8-c6, is a natural and good move, but the veteran Czech master aims to exchange off White's aggressive bishop. 10.♗xa6 ♕a5+ is a typical stroke in such positions.

10. ♘g1-f3 ♘a6-b4
11. 0-0 ♘b4xd3
12. c2xd3 ♕d8-d7
13. ♗c1-e3 c6-c5
14. a2-a3 ...

The first link in a chain of astounding pawn breaks (17.b4!, 20.c6!, 22.e6!), shifting from left to right. Black would have been able to consolidate his position after the positional sacrifice 14.♗xc5!?: 14... ♗xc5 15.♕xg7 ♖f8 (15...0-0-0? 16.♖fc1, and Black is routed) 16.♖ac1 ♖c8 (16...♗e7 17.♘d4) 17.♘g5 ♗f5 18.♘xh7 ♗xh7 19.♕xh7 ♖c6.

14. ... ♗e6-f5
15. ♖f1-c1 d5-d4?!

After 15...b6 16.b4 ♖c8 17.bc bc 18.♖ab1 c4 19.e6! ♗xe6 20.dc dc 21.♖b8 f6 the king sneaks away to f7, which does not squash White's initiative, though.

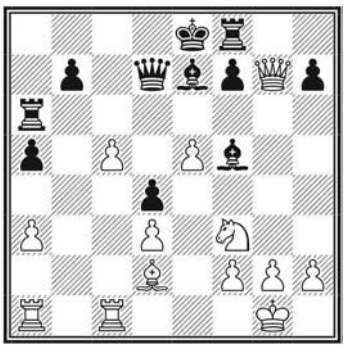
16. ♗e3-d2 a7-a5

If 16...♕b5 17.b4! ♕xd3 18.e6! ♗xe6 19.bc ♖c8 20.♕e5 then Black has reached White's weak pawn, but he has not finished his development yet, and he has a dubious-looking position.

17. b2-b4! ♖a8-a6
18. b4xc5 ♗f8-e7

Pribyl may have been counting on 18...♖g6, but upon calculating a rather gloomy line 19.e6! ♗xe6 20.♕f4 ♖g4 21.♕b8+ ♕c8 22.♕xc8+ ♗xc8 23.♖ab1, he changed his mind.

19. ♕g3xg7 ♖h8-f8



20. c5-c6! b7xc6
21. ♖a1-b1 ♖a6-a8
22. e5-e6! f7xe6

If 22...♗xe6, then 23.♘xd4 c5 24.♘xe6 fe 25.♕xh7, and White is two pawns up and has a great position.

23. ♘f3-e5 ♕d7-d5
24. ♖b1-b7 ♗e7-f6
25. ♗d2-g5!! ♗f6xg7
26. ♖b7-e7+ ♔e8-d8
27. ♘e5xc6+ ♔d8-c8

If 27...♕xc6 28.♖xg7+ then Black's pieces are so poorly placed that he will have to return material with much interest, as in the text.

28. ♘c6-b4+ ♔c8-b8
29. ♘b4xd5 ♗f5xd3
30. ♖e7xg7 e5xd5
31. ♗g5-e7

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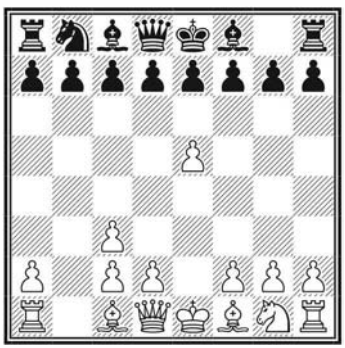
Perhaps 3...♘b6 cannot be recommended. Of the two defenses, 3...c6 and 3...e6, the latter option occurs more often, but the former one can help Black better to equalize.

Chapter 20. 3.♘c3 ♘xc3 4.bc

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. ♘b1-c3 ♘d5xc3

Clearly, this exchange is more ambitious than all the other lines analyzed in the previous chapter.

4. b2xc3 ...



The next chapter focuses on the other capture. By capturing towards the center, White forms a powerful pawn enclave, but it is not that easy to activate his pieces.

4. ... d7-d6

We covered 4...d5 5.d4 in Chapter 5 (2.♘c3 d5 3.e5 ♘e4 4.d4 ♘xc3 5.bc). Solovjov, instead of d2-d4, undermined the d5-pawn against Rozum, St. Petersburg 2011: 5.f4 c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.c4 e6 (7...g6, not blocking the bishop, is interesting, too) 8.cd ♕xd5 9.c3 ♗e7 10.d3 0-0 11.♗e2 f6 12.♕b3 ♕xb3 13.ab b6 14.♗e3 ♗b7 15.0-0 ♘a5 16.♖fb1 ♖fc8 17.♘d2 ♔f7 18.♔f2 ♖c7 19.♘c4 ♘xc4 20.dc=.

If 5.♗a3 then Black can lose castling rights rather easily, which he should not be afraid of. For instance, 5...b6 6.d4 c5 7.dc e6 8.♗b5+ ♗d7 9.cb ♕xb6 10.♗xd7+ ♘xd7 11.♗xf8 ♔xf8 12.♘f3 ♖c8 13.0-0 ♕c7 14.♕d4 ♕xc3 15.♕xa7 ♘xe5 16.♘xe5 ♕xe5, and Black is brimming with optimism in this tough position, Smith – Yermolinsky, Washington 2008. After 10.♗xf8 ♗xb5 11.♗d6 White is still doing a little better, but 9... axb6 would be an improvement on that line and the text (because the rook now has an open file).

Tirard – Krasenkow (France 2007) continued 6...♕d7!? 7.♖b1 ♗a6 8.♗xa6 ♘xa6 9.♕e2 ♕a4 10.e6! fe 11.♕xe6 c6 12.♘f3 ♘c7 13.♕e5 0-0-0 14.♖b3 e6 15.♗xf8 ♖hxf8 16.a3 ♖f6 17.0-0 ♖df8 18.♕d6 ♖xf3!? 19.gf ♖xf3 20.♖e1 ♖f6 21.♖e3. The exchange sacrifice hardly changed the game's

pattern, and White maintained a slight advantage. 9...♘b8!? 10.♕f3 e6 11.♗xf8 ♖xf8, delaying, but not passing up the typical French Defense maneuver (♕d7-a4), is more desirable.

5. f2-f4 ...

Fianchettoing the bishop is a solid reply to 5.♘f3. The ancient game Yates – Colle (Hastings 1925) proves our point: 5...g6 6.d4 ♗g7 7.♗f4 0-0 8.♗e2 ♘c6 9.ed cd 10.♕d2 ♕c7 11.0-0 b6 12.♗h6 ♗b7 13.♗xg7 ♔xg7 14.♘h4?! (White should have locked up Black's long-range bishop with the d-pawn) 14...♘a5 15.♖ae1 ♖ac8 16.♗d3 e6 17.♕f4 ♕d8 (17...♕xc3 18.♖e3 ♘c4 is no worse) 18.♖e3 ♕f6 19.♕g4 ♖c7 20.f4 ♔h8 21.♖h3 ♖xc3 22.f5 gf?? 23.♘xf5 ♕g6 24.♘e7. Black was close to win until just a few moves before he capitulated (22...exf5 23.♘xf5 ♗c8).

5.ed ed had been played in an even more dated battle Johner – Marco (Bad Pistyan 1922). Their duel proved to be fascinating. After 6.d4 d5 7.♘f3 ♗d6 8.♗e2 0-0 9.0-0 ♖e8 10.c4 dc 11.♗xc4 ♗e6 (11..h6 would have been more appropriate, and White should have exchanged bishops) 12.♗d3 h6 13.h3 ♘d7 14.c4 c6 15.♗b2 ♕a5 16.♘d2 ♘f6 17.f4 ♖ad8 18.f5 ♗c8 19.c5 ♗b8 20.♘c4 ♕c7 21.♘d6 ♖xd6! 22.cd ♕xd6 23.♕f3? (23.♖e1, and White holds on somehow) 23...♕h2+ 24.♔f2 ♘h5 25.♕xh5 ♕g3+, and Black drew by perpetual check, missing an easy win 25...♗g3+ 26.♔f3 ♗f4, and a more sophisticated 24...♗g3+ 25.♕xg3 ♖e2+!. Tartakower recommended 17.d5, ripping apart the kingside, but 17...cxd5 18.♗xf6 gf 19.♘b3 ♕c3 20.c5 ♗c7 21.f4 f5 would have neutralized any real threats.

5. ... g7-g6

Fianchettoing the bishop is a priority here, too. After 5...♘c6 6.d4 ♗f5 7.♖b1 de 8.fe e6 9.♘f3 ♘a5 10.♗d3 ♕d5 11.0-0 ♗e7 12.♗g5 ♗xd3 13.cd f6 14.ef gf 15.♕a4+ c6 16.c4 ♕d7 17.♗d2 b6 18.♗xa5 ba 19.♕xa5 Zvjaginsev won a pawn against B.Savchenko (Serpukhov 2007) and obtained an overwhelming position. Savchenko lost because of his erroneous plan aimed at blockading on the light squares, not because of some minor slipups. 10...♗e7 11.0-0 ♗g6 12.♕e2 b6 would have been quite acceptable.

The variations involving an exchange on e5 are covered in Game 21.

6. d2-d4 ♗f8-g7
7. ♘g1-f3 0-0
8. ♗f1-d3 ...

This developing move, a sort of compromise between ♗c4 and ♗e2, is seen most often. 8.♗c4 should be met by e5-e6, but after 8...c5 9.0-0 ♕c7 10.♕e2 ♘c6 11.e6 f5 12.♗e3 b6 13.h4 h5 the position became quite dull in Canal – Colle, Merano 1926. Black has a more exciting line at his disposal: 11...cd 12.ef+ ♔h8 13.♘g5 dc 14.♗e3 ♗f5.

The miniature Baklan – Passchyn (Ghent 2009) is noteworthy: 8.♗e2 c5 9.0-0 b6 10.♕e1 de 11.fe ♗f5 12.♕h4 e6?! 13.♗g5 f6? 14.ef ♗xf6 15.♗xf6 ♕xf6 16.♘g5. Black resigned upon calculating the following variation: 16...♕g7 17.♘xe6! ♗xe6 18.♖xf8+ ♕xf8 19.♕e4 ♘d7 20.♕xe6+ ♕f7 21.♗c4. Post-mortem analysis allows one to establish the reason for Black's failure — he lagged behind in development and should have played 12...♘c6, instead of 12...e6?!.

8. ... c7-c5

9. 0-0 d6xe5

After 9...cxd4 10.cd ♘c6 11.c3 ♗g4 12.h3 ♗xf3 13.♖xf3 de 14.fe ♘xd4!? 15.cd ♕xd4+ 16.♗e3 ♕xe5 17.♖c1 ♗f6 18.♕b3 b6 19.♗a6 ♖ad8 20.♗h6 ♗g7 21.♗xg7 ♔xg7 22.♕e3 ♕xe3+ 23.♖xe3 ♖d7 24.♗c8 ♖dd8 25.♖ec3 E.Sveshnikov – Neiksans, Riga 2012, the piece was, is, and will be stronger than the three pawns. 14...♘xd4!? appears to be a rather forced attempt at breaking up White's pawn chain. However, it is essential that the game started 1.e4 c5 2.c3, and an unforced capture c5xd4 occurred much earlier.

10. d4xe5 ...

White snaps his pawn chain voluntarily, because it is easier here to protect his pawns separately. After 10.fe ♘c6 11.♗e3 ♗g4 12.♗e4 ♕a5 13.♕d3 ♖ad8 14.♕c4 cd 15.cd ♗e6 16.♕e2 ♕a4 17.♗d3 Solozhenkin grabbed Castro's central pawn a bit too prematurely (Manresa 1993): 17...♘xd4?! 18.♘xd4 ♖xd4 19.♗b5! ♕b4 20.c3 ♕xc3 21.♖fc1 ♗g4 22.♖xc3 ♗xe2 23.♗xd4 ♗xb5 24.♖e1, and he does not appear to have enough compensation for the exchange. In the event of the correct 17...♘b4 Black would have been absolutely fine.

10. ... ♘b8-c6

10...♕a5 would be met by 11.♖b1!?, offering up one of two pawns. After 11...♕xa2 12.♗e3 White is counting on winning back the c5-pawn, while if 11...♕xc3?! 12.♖b5! then White threatens to trap Black's queen with 13.♗b2.

11. ♗c1-e3 b7-b6

12. ♕d1-e1 ♗c8-f5

13. ♖a1-d1 ♕d8-c8

14. ♕e1-h4 f7-f6



Tirard – Spraggett (Metz 2010) continued 15.♖fe1 ♗xd3 16.cd ♕e6 17.d4 cd 18.cd ♖ad8 19.♖c1 ♕d5 20.♕h3 f5 21.♗f2 e6, and Black set up an impenetrable blockade on the light squares. It

seems like the Canadian GM could have snapped up a pawn and gotten off scot-free: 16...fxe5 17.fe ♘xe5 18.♘xe5 ♗xe5 (19.♗h6 would be met by the intermediate 19...♗f6), so 15.♗c4+ ♗e6 16.♗b3 ♗xb3 17.cb ♕f5= looks to be the strongest continuation.

Game 21
H.Hoffmann – E.Rozentalis
Bad Wiessee 2012

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**♘b1-c3**	**♘d5xc3**
4.	**b2xc3**	**d7-d6**
5.	**f2-f4**	**d6xe5**
6.	**f4xe5**	**...**



6. ... c7-c5

6...♕d5 has been played most often, looking to set up a blockade on the light squares and swarming the weak c3-pawn after d2-d4. In Tal – Podgaets (Sochi 1970) Black used his queen to support c7-c5: 7.d4 c5 8.♘f3 ♘c6 9.♗e2 ♗g4 10.0-0 cd 11.cd e6 12.♖b1 ♕d7 13.♘g5 ♗xe2?! (he should have dropped the knight back to f5) 14.♕xe2 ♗e7 15.c3 ♗xg5 16.♗xg5 h6 17.♗c1, and White successfully activates his bishop via a3. Black should focus on mobilizing his kingside forces before committing to a particular setup on the queenside: 7...♗f5 8.♗e2 e6 9.♘f3 ♗e7 10.0-0 h6 11.♗d3 ♗xd3 12.♕xd3 0-0.

7. ♗f1-c4 ...

If the bishop chooses a more modest square then a plan involving a bishop fianchetto seems to be the best: 7.♘f3 ♘c6 8.♗e2 g6 9.0-0 ♗g7 10.d4 0-0 11.♗e3 ♗g4 12.♖b1 ♕d7 13.♕d3 ♖ad8 14.♖fd1 ♕c8 15.♕b5 b6 16.♕a4 cd 17.cd ♘a5 18.♖bc1 ♗xf3 19.♗xf3 ♘c4 20.♕b3 ♘xe3 21.♕xe3 f6 Pelikian – Peralta, Brazil 2002. Black has tried swarming, blockading, and undermining his opponent's pawn cluster, but has not gained any advantage. 14...a6 and 15...b5 may have been more promising.

7.	**...**	**e7-e6**
8.	**♘g1-f3**	**♗f8-e7**
9.	**0-0**	**0-0**
10.	**♕d1-e1**	**♗c8-d7**

Rozentalis planned and executed a clever and quite successful bishop maneuver to back up his king. However, if 11.♕g3 ♗c6 12.d3! then he would have come up a bit short, so 10...♕c7 11.♕g3 f5, using the queen opposition, was worth considering.

11. d2-d4 ♗d7-c6
12. ♕e1-g3 ♗c6-e4
13. ♗c4-d3 ♗e4-g6
14. ♗d3xg6 f7xg6!

This is the whole point! After 14...hxg6? 15.♗g5, an exchange of bishops, and ♘f3-g5, Black would find it hard to fend off his opponent's onslaught. But now White's initiative peters out and the e6-pawn has full immunity.

15. ♗c1-g5 ♘b8-c6
16. ♗g5xe7 ♕d8xe7
17. ♖a1-d1 ♖a8-d8
18. ♕g3-g4 ♖f8-f5
19. ♕g4-e4 g6-g5
20. g2-g3?! ...

Hoffman had been in pretty good shape up until now: he centralized his queen just in the nick of time, threatening d4-d5. This threat cannot be executed immediately because of ♖f5-f4, so White intends to put it off on the next move. But now the knight has been left hanging, so 20.♖f2 would have been stronger.

20. ... ♖d8-f8
21. ♘f3-d2 c5xd4
22. c3xd4 ♕e7-b4
23. ♖f1xf5 ♖f8xf5

Diagram



24. c2-c4?! ...

The Lithuanian GM is just as good at defending as he is at counterattacking, which rattled his less experienced opponent. White should have continued with 24.♘f3 ♕c3 25.d5 ♖xf3 26.dc bc 27.♔g2.

The rook endgame resulting after 27...♖f5 28.♖d8+ ♔f7 29.♖d7+ ♔e8 30.♖d6 ♔e7 31.♕xc6 ♕xc6 32.♖xc6 ♖xe5, and the queen endgame ensuing after 27...g4!? 28.♖d8+ (28.♕xg4? ♕xc2+) 28... ♖f8 29.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 favor Black, but a draw is quite likely in both cases.

24. ... ♕b4-c3
25. ♘d2-b3 ♕c3xc4
26. ♘b3-c5? ...

Hoffmann shuts down right away instead of continuing to put up some form of resistance with 26.♕e3.

26. ... ♘c6xd4
27. ♔g1-g2 ♕c4xa2+
28. ♔g2-h3 h7-h5
28. ♖d1-h1 g5-g4+
0-1

Capturing towards the center is stunningly impractical! Those who prefer closed pawn chains opt for 4... d5, while those who feel the need to exert pressure on their opponent's pawns opt for 4...d6. You cannot go wrong with either move!

Chapter 21. 3.♘c3 ♘xc3 4.dc

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. ♘b1-c3 ♘d5xc3
4. d2xc3 ...



Capturing away from the center has nothing in common with 4.bc. It opens up superb files and diagonals for White's queen and dark-squared bishop, but if White cannot capitalize upon this then Black's pawn majority will give White a real headache in the endgame.

4. ... d7-d6

Statistically this move outnumbers all the other replies put together. We shall see ♘c6 combined with 4...d6 in Game 22. Often players go for 4...d5, aiming for a more closed position. It is best for White to undermine the center, using Kuzmin – Alburt (Leningrad 1974) as a model: 5.c4 c6 6.♘f3 ♗g4 7.h3 ♗xf3 8.♕xf3 e6 9.cd ♕xd5 10.♕xd5 cd 11.c4 ♗b4+ 12.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 13.♔xd2 ♘c6 14.f4 0-0-0 15.♔e3 h6 16.♖d1 ♘e7 17.cd ♘xd5+ 18.♔f3 ♘b6. However, after exchanging along the d-file a peace treaty will be signed soon probably. If 5.♘f3 c5 6.c4 then Black fights for more space on equal footing: 6...d4 7.♗d3 g6 8.h3 ♗g7 9.♕e2 ♕c7 10.0-0 ♘c6 11.♖e1 0-0, swarming the e5-pawn. Eventually, the c6-knight can shift to e6 via d8, while the c8-bishop can shift to c6 via d7.

5. ♘g1-f3 ...

When commentating his famous game against Kolste (Baden-Baden 1925), Reti maintained that 5.ed was obligatory, greatly underestimating White's initiative after an exchange of queens (5.♘f3 de 6.♕xd8+ ♔xd8). Nevertheless, Reti still considered this exchange to be losing. Let us take a look at one continuation played by two fairly good players: 5.ed ♕xd6 6.♗e3 ♘c6 7.♕d3 e5 8.0-0-0 ♕xd3 9.♗xd3 ♗d6 10.♘e2 ♗d7 11.♘g3 0-0-0 12.♘e4 f6 13.♘c5 ♗xc5 14.♗xc5 b6 15.♗a3 ♗e6 16.f3 ♖d7 17.b3 ♘d8 18.♖he1 c5 19.♔b1 ♔c7 20.♗c1 ♘f7 21.c4 ♖hd8 Managadze – Kallio, Kavala 2005. Black is just fine, but White's bishop duet will probably keep him from capitalizing upon his pawn majority. Clearly, Richard Reti's evaluation of the 4.dc sideline was not exactly objective.

V.Bagirov (Black) routed Rahls (Kusadasi 1990) in no time: 5.♗f4 ♘c6 6.♘f3 ♗g4 7.♗b5 a6 8.♗xc6+ bc 9.h3 ♗h5 10.g4 ♗g6 11.♕e2 e6 12.0-0-0 d5 13.h4 h5 14.♖dg1?! ♕b8 15.♘d2 hg 16.♕xg4 ♕b5 17.♗g5 ♖b8 18.b3 ♕a5 19.♘c4 ♕xc3. A series of weak moves wrecked the German master's position, but we would like to draw special attention to the queen's forced retreat from e2, which could have been prevented with 14.g5. 10.c4 e6 11.c3 would have kept the position balanced, aiming to move the queen to its own flank and keeping the king on the kingside.

The main drawback to 5.♗c4 ♘c6 6.♘f3 de 7.♕xd8+ ♘xd8 (relative to the main line) is that Black maintains castling rights after an exchange of queens. Chetverik did not even need to castle against Hola (Pardubice 1997): 8.♘xe5 f6 9.♘d3 e5 10.0-0 ♗e6 11.♗b5+ c6 12.♗a4 ♗e7 13.♗e3 ♔f7 14.♗b3 g5 15.♖fd1 b6 16.♘b4 a5 17.♗xe6+ ♔xe6 18.♘d3 c5, and White lacks any active plans. White has tried to avoid the exchange with 7.♕e2, but his initiative also would be fleeting, like in the following variation: 7.♕e2 f6 8.♘h4 g6 9.f4 ef 10.♗xf4 e5 11.♗g3 ♕e7.

5. ... d6xe5
6. ♕d1xd8+ ♔e8xd8
7. ♘f3xe5 ♔d8-e8

It is best for Black to move his king immediately, since it will come in handy anyway. After 7...♗e6 8.♗e3 ♘d7 9.0-0-0 ♔e8 10.♘f3 ♗g4 11.♗e2 e5 12.h3 ♗f5 13.♖he1 f6 14.♗c4 ♗e4 15.♘h4 g5 16.f3 ♗c5 (Ashton – Baburin, England 2005) 17.♗xc5 ♘xc5 18.b4 ♗c6 19.bc gh 20.♖d4 White wins a pawn, and can torture his opponent, despite having tripled pawns. Black is still hurting in the following forced variation: 11...e6 12.♖xd7 ♗xf3 13.♗b5 ♗e2 14.♗a4 b5 15.♖d2 ♗c4 16.♗b3 ♗xb3 17.cb.

8. ♗f1-c4 ...

8.♗e3, followed by castling long, forces Black to play precisely. For example, 8...e6 9.0-0-0 ♘d7 10.♗b5 ♗d6 (10...c6? 11.♘xc6 bc? 12.♗xc6 is fatal for the black rook) 11.♘c4 ♔e7 12.♖d2 ♘f6 13.♖hd1 ♘d5 14.♘xd6 cd (Sedlak – Spraggett, Vrsac 2008) 15.♗d4 followed by c3-c4-c5, clearing the way for White's bishops. However, Bagirov noted, all the way back in 1986, that an immediate 8...♘d7 and then e7-e5 in reply to a knight retreat, equalizes.

8. ... e7-e6
9. ♗c1-e3 ...

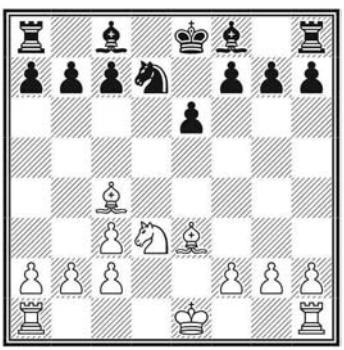
Tarrasch and Reti (Baden-Baden 1925) agreed a quick draw after calm and equal play: 9.♗f4 ♗d6 10.♗g3 ♘d7 11.♘f3 ♘b6 12.♗e2 ♗d7 13.♘e5 f6 14.♘xd7 ♘xd7 15.0-0-0 ♔e7 16.♗f3 ♗xg3 17.hg c6 18.♗e4 h6 19.♖d4 ♖hd8 20.♖hd1 ♘c5. Developing the bishop to f4 does not have any bite; however, it is hard for Black to avoid the simplifications leading to a draw. A half-point is not always desirable, after all.

In the event of 9.f4 Black has more possibilities. For example, 9...♘d7 10.♘f3 ♗d6 11.♗d2 ♔e7 12.0-0-0 ♖e8 13.♖de1 ♔f8 14.♖hf1 h6 15.g4 ♘b6 16.♗d3 ♗d7 17.♘e5 ♖ad8 18.h4 ♔g8 19.g5 hg 20.fg ♗xe5 21.♖xe5 ♗c6 22.h5 ♖d5 23.♖e2 ♗b5 24.♗xb5 ♖xb5 25.h6 ♘c4 26.h7+ ♔xh7 27.♖xf7 ♖d8 28.♖xc7 ♖xd2 29.♖xd2 ♘xd2 30.♔xd2 ♖xb2, and Black converted his minimal advantage in Steams – Baburin, San Francisco 2001. However, 25.b3 (followed by c3-c4) keeps the knight off c4, and Black has to seek out other chances.

9. ... ♘b8-d7

If 9...♗d6 10.♘d3 then both the maneuver executed by Jansa (♗c8-d7-c6), and the ♔e8-e7, ♖h8-d8, b7-b6 setup with the bishop on b7 or a6 are good options. Black has his pick of two solid options now, too.

10. ♘e5-d3 ...



In Radulov – Westerinen (Helsinki 1972) White achieved an enormous positional advantage after 10...♗d6 11.0-0-0 ♔e7 12.♖he1 b6 13.♗g5+ ♘f6?! 14.f4 ♖e8 15.♗d5 ♖b8 16.♘e5 ♔f8 17.♗c6 ♖d8 18.g3 h6 19.♗h4 ♔g8 20.c4 ♗b7 21.♗xb7 ♖xb7 22.♘c6 ♖a8 23.♗xf6 gf 24.f5 e5 25.b4. The opening is not to blame, though: 13...♔f8 would have kept Black from conceding e5 and the light squares (14.♗b5 ♘b8! followed by a7-a6 and b7-b5). It is easier for Black to equalize by activating his queen's bishop: 10...♘b6 11.♗b3 ♗d7 12.♘e5 (Black had been planning ♗f8-d6 and ♗d7-c6) 12...♗d6 13.♘xd7 ♘xd7 14.0-0-0 ♔e7 15.♖he1 ♖hd8 16.h4 ♔f8 17.h5 h6 18.g4 ♗c5 Zvara – Turner, Pardubice 2007.

Game 22

P.Zvara – V.Sergeev

Czech Republic 2002

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**♘b1-c3**	**♘d5xc3**
4.	**d2xc3**	**♘b8-c6**
5.	**♘g1-f3**	**d7-d6**



6. ♗f1-b5 ...

Only this pin makes the 4...♘c6 line independent. 6.♗f4 comes out of the 4...d6 5.♗f4 variation, while 6.♗c4 transposes back into the sideline with 4...d6 5.♗c4.

6. ... a7-a6

Black immediately picks up the bishop pair at the cost of a slightly deformed pawn chain, which is not critical, as White is ailed by the same defect. Black very rarely fianchettoes his bishop — after 6...g6 7.0-0 ♗g7 8.♖e1 0-0 9.ed cd 10.♗g5 it comes up against queenside pawns, while White starts exerting pressure on his opponent's position. Korchnoi (Black) got the raw end of the stick against Markland (Bath 1973) after 6...♗d7 7.♕e2 ♘xe5 8.♘xe5 de 9.♕xe5 f6 10.♕h5+ g6 11.♕e2 e5 12.♗e3 ♗d6 13.0-0-0 b6 14.f4 0-0 15.fe ♗xb5 16.♕xb5 fe 17.♗h6 ♖f7 18.♕d5 ♕e8 19.h4 ♖d8 20.h5 e4 21.♗e3. He should have gone for 9...a6 10.♗c4 ♗c6 11.0-0 ♕d6, shooting for an exchange of queens.

7. ♗b5xc6+ b7xc6

8. 0-0 ...

If 8.♗f4 ♖b8 9.b3 e6 10.♕d3 d5 11.0-0 ♕d7 12.♖ad1 a5 13.♖fe1 ♖a8 (Torre – Reti, Baden-Baden 1925) 14.a4 ♗a6 15.c4 then Black struggles to muster up any meaningful counterplay, and he has a slightly worse position. He should prefer 9...f6 10.ef gf 11.0-0 ♕d7, and after c6-c5 the b7-bishop will create some additional threats.

8. ... e7-e6

8...♗g4 9.♕e2 ♕d7 10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♕xf3 e6, with very calm play in which the e5-pawn slightly cramps his opponent, is more solid.

9. ♗c1-f4 ♗f8-e7

10. ♕d1-d2 ...

White misses a chance at clinging onto his opponent's weak pawns: 10.♘d4! ♕d7 11.♕f3 d5 12.♕g3. Lakdawala's variation 12...g5!? 13.♗e3 c5 14.♘b3 c4 15.♘d4 c5 16.♘f3 h6 17.h4 clearly favors White.

10. ... f7-f6!

The first part of Black's strategy that eventually triumphed. Zvara has to think long and hard about how to counter gradually advancing pawns...

11. e5xf6 g7xf6

12. ♘f3-d4?! ...

...and at least he should not provoke Black. He could have played some universally beneficial moves like ♗f4-g3 and ♖f1-e1, and then adjust his play based on Black's follow-up.

12. ... ♕d8-d7

13. ♗f4-g3 e6-e5

14. ♘d4-f3 ...

On the one hand, it is undesirable for the knight to block the f2-pawn, while on the other hand, it does not look to have a particularly bright future on b3 (14.♘b3 h5 15.f3 h4 16.♗f2 a5 17.a4 ♕f5 18.♗e3 ♗e6).

14. ... ♕d7-g4

15. ♖f1-e1 ♗c8-b7

16. b2-b4 0-0-0

17. ♘f3-d4 ...

This second attempt seems more rational because the knight is approaching the black king. But those are pseudo threats, so White should have checked 17.h3 ♕d7 18.♕e2 first, and gone forward with a2-a4 and b4-b5, if need be.

17. ... h7-h5
18. f2-f3 ♕g4-d7
19. ♘d4-b3 h5-h4
20. ♗g3-f2 ♖d8-g8
21. ♔g1-f1 h4-h3

Sergeev intended to set up a battery along the long diagonal; however, White manages to exchange queens and avoid the worst. Sliding the queen over to the g-file via f5 was worth considering.

22. g2-g3 c6-c5
23. ♕d2-d3 ♕d7-c6
24. ♖e1-e3 c5-c4
25. ♕d3-f5+ ♕c6-d7
26. ♕f5xd7+ ♔c8xd7
27. ♘b3-a5?! ...

The Czech master did not foresee the dark-squared bishop becoming active; otherwise he would have dropped the knight back to d2, thereby covering f3.

27. ... ♗b7-d5
28. ♖a1-d1? ...

Still oblivious to his opponent's master plan. After 28.a4 c6 29.♖ee1 ♗d8 30.♔e2 f5 White still has a lot to play for.

28. ... c7-c6
29. ♔f1-e2 ♗e7-d8!
30. ♖e3-e4 ♗d5xe4
31. f3xe4 ♗d8xa5
32. b4xa5 ♔d7-e6

0-1

In modern chess theory dynamic play often outweighs the position's static characteristics. Also, concrete variations often prevail over general principles. This is even fair to say about the calm 4... d6 line, followed by an exchange of queens. One should not blindly accept the statements made by renown chess theorists of the past who undervalued White's hidden potential; it would be more sound to assume that it makes up for White's defective pawn structure.

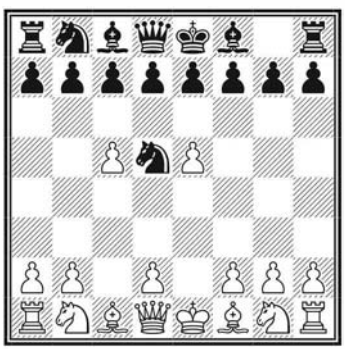
Part 5. The Two Pawns Attack

Introduction

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6

Let us take a little breather. The c-pawn has kicked the knight to a square rightly considered to be not good for it in the Alekhine Defense as well as in other openings. The move c4-c5, essential in the Two Pawns Attack, sends the knight back to the center, so we have to mention a few continuations (see Game 23) besides 4.d4, transposing back to the 3.d4 variations.

4. c4-c5 ♘b6-d5



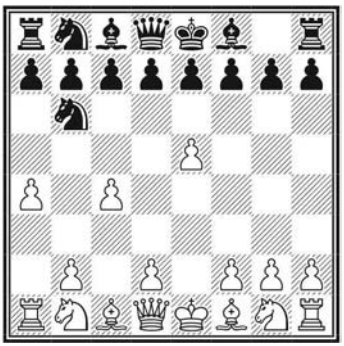
White's pawns have usurped a lot of territory, clawing their way into Black's camp. It is easy for White to set up his pieces as he wishes thanks to his audacious pawns. The centralized knight, one piece of consolation for Black, can be traded off quite easily, too. Nevertheless, Alekhine Defense players no longer have anything to fear about the Two Pawns Attack. The c5- and e5-pawns are too vulnerable, which gives Black great chances at stirring up some counterplay.

Game 23
R.Kurayan – L.Nestorovic
Albena 2011

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
4. a2-a4 ...

Diagram

Directly threatening to liquidate Black's restless knight. 4.b3, setting up a bishop fianchetto, is worthy of separate analysis. Two Hungarian masters, the Steiner brothers, Lajos



and Endre, spearheaded this line. After 4...d6 5.ed ed 6.♗b2 d5 7.♘f3 ♘c6 8.cd ♘xd5 9.♘c3?! (9.♗e2 and 10.0-0 was necessary) 9... ♘f4 10.♕c2 ♕e7+ 11.♕e4 ♗f5 12.♕xe7+ ♗xe7 13.0-0-0 0-0-0 Black increased and converted the advantage he obtained in E. Steiner – Gruenfeld, Budapest 1932. 4...c5 5.♗b2 ♘c6 6.♘f3 d6 7.ed ♕xd6 8.♗e2 e5 9.0-0 ♗e7, and 10.♖e1? e4 11.♗xg7 ♖g8 12.♗b2 ♗h3 13.g3 0-0-0 turned out to be a disaster for White in Ptacnik – Pribyl, Tatranske Zruby 2002. If 10.♘c3 ♗f5 11.♖e1 e4 12.♘b5 then White wins the e5-square for his knight, but that will not be of serious concern for Black. 4.b3 has completely disappeared from top-level chess.

On 4.♘c3 the best reply is 4... d6, which will almost definitely transpose back into the main lines. Krizsany and Videki cite Blatny's fabulous analysis in their book: 4... c5 5.♘f3 ♘c6 (5...d5 6.ed ed 7.d4 ♗e7 is stronger) 6.d4 cd 7.♘xd4 ♘xe5? 8.c5! ♘bc4 9.f4 ♘xb2 10.♗xb2 ♘g6 11.♗c4 ♘xf4 12.0-0 e5 13.♕h5!! ♕f6 (13...♘xh5 14.♗xf7+ ♔e7 15.♘d5#) 14.♖xf4 ♕xf4 15.♘d5 ♕e4 16.♘f6+! gf 17.♕xf7+ ♔d8 18.♘e6+! de 19.♖d1+. Naturally, with a piece for two pawns and an overwhelming lead in development, White can win in any number of ways, including 11.f5 ♘e5 (11...♘f4 12.g3) 12.♘db5 a6 13.♘d5.

4. ... a7-a5

4...d5 and 4...d6 sometimes result in a harmless exchange on d6: 5.ed ♕xd6!? 6.a5 ♘6d7 7.♘c3 ♕e6+ 8.♗e2 ♕g6 9.♗f3 ♕e6+ with a possible draw by repetition. If 4...d5 5.c5 then the knight is pressed back to d7, and the typical impeding pawn sacrifice is on the agenda. Black should have his guard up — 5...♘6d7 6.d4 b6 7.♕c2 bc 8.e6!? fe 9.♗d3 ♘f6 10.♘f3 cd? (10...♘c6 is correct) 11.♗g6+! hg 12.♕xg6+ ♔d7 13.♘e5+, looking to fork three of his opponent's pieces.

After 4...d6 5.a5 ♘6d7 it is best for White to refrain from making a break in the center because his outer pawn had been marching on at the expense of development, and Black can break White's hold in the center. For example, 6.e6?! fe 7.d4 e5! 8.♗d3 g6 9.d5 e6! 10.♘c3 ed 11.cd ♘c5 12.♗c2 ♘ba6 13.♗e3 ♗g7 (13...♕h4!?) 14.h4 ♕f6 15.♘f3 ♗f5 16.♗a4+ ♔f8 17.♗b5 ♘b4 Firman – Seel, Oropesa 2000, and White did, indeed, deprive his opponent of castling rights, but he

does not have a more active position to compensate for the sacrificed pawn.

An exchange on d6 is more appropriate, especially as capturing with the queen is not possible. The game plays out like some standard variations in the exchange variation. If 6.ed ed 7.d4 ♗e7 8.♘f3 0-0 9.♗d3 ♖e8 10.0-0 ♗f6 then Black is well on his way to achieving an equal position. 6...cxd6 7.d4 g6 8.♘f3 ♗g7 9.♗e2 0-0 10. 0-0 ♘c6, aiming at two different targets, is more abrupt. After 11.d5 ♘xa5 12.♗d2 b6 13.♗c3 ♘e5 14.♘d4 ♗d7 15.b3 g5!? 16.♘d2 ♘b7 17.♘2f3 h6 18.♘xe5 ♗xe5 Firman – Neverov, Ordzhonikidze 2001, White has the initiative for a pawn and a weakened kingside, but this weakening was not forced (15...♕c7!? 16.f4 ♘g4 17.♗xg4 ♗xg4 18.♕xg4? ♗xd4+ 19.♗xd4 ♘xb3). Or 9.♖a3 0-0 10.♗e2 d5 11.0-0 dc 12.♘bd2, and instead of 12...b5 13.ab ♘xb6 14.♘xc4 ♗b7 15.♘a5 ♗d5 16.♘e5 e6 17.♗f4, which gave White a more active setup in (Ponkratov – Volodin, Izhevsk 2011), 12...♘c6 13.♘xc4 ♘f6 was a more natural and solid continuation.

5. ♖a1-a3!? ...

Sliding the rook over to the kingside (made possible by the early pawn advance) leads us away from the Two Pawns Attack into uncharted territory, while 5.d4 d6 6.ed is akin to the exchange variation. Including a2-a4 and a7-a5 probably favors Black because it makes White's pawn chain less flexible and impedes a queenside attack.

If 5.c5 ♘d5 then White feels the weakness on b4 even more. After 6.♘c3 ♘b4 7.♗c4 d5 8.cd ed 9.♕b3 ♕e7 10.♘f3 ♗g4 11. 0-0 ♗xf3 12.ed cd 13.gf ♘bc6 14.d4 ♘xd4 15.♕d1 ♕f6 (Lu Shanglei – Bu Xiangzhi, Xinghua 2012) 16.♘e4 ♕g6+ 17.♔h1 ♕f5 18.♘g5 ♘bc6 19.♗xf7+ ♔e7 20.♗a2 the complications probably favor White, but 10...c6 11.0-0 d5 12.♗e2 ♗f5 closes up the position and nips White's initiative in the bud.

5. ... d7-d6

6. e5xd6 c7xd6

If 6...ed then the rook can make a stop along the way, checking the king: 7.d4 ♗f5 8.♖e3+. White achieves nothing though: 8...♗e7 9.♗d3 ♗xd3 10.♕xd3 0-0 11.♖h3 g6 12.b3 ♗g5 13.f4?! (13.♗d2 or 13.♘e2 would have been cleaner) 13...♖e8+ 14.♔d1 ♗f6 15.♘f3 ♘c6 16.♗d2 ♕d7 17.♘a3 ♘b4 18.♗xb4 ab 19.♘c2 (Beletsky – Barrera, Spain 2005) 19...c5 with excellent prospects.

7. ♖a3-g3 g7-g6

8. h2-h4 h7-h5

There is no much need to impede the h-pawn. After 8...♗g7 9.h5 ♗f5 10.♘a3 ♗e5 11.♖e3 ♘c6 12.♘f3 ♗f6 Black would have removed White's rook from the kingside, and he would be doing just fine.

9. d2-d4 ♗f8-g7
10. ♘b1-c3 ♘b8-c6
11. ♗c1-e3 ...

The rook has finished his job on the kingside, and White should not have cut him off from his queen. After 11.♘b5 the rook would have still been covering the vulnerable c2-square from c3.

13. ... ♗c8-f5
12. ♘c3-b5 0-0

The Serbian master lets most of his advantage slip away by stereotyped castling. Black could have obtained a definite positional edge with 12...♘b4 13.♘a3 d5! 14.cd 0-0, and 14.c5?! (similar to the text) looks cheerless because of 14...♘c4.

13. b2-b3?! ♘c6-b4
14. ♘b5-a3 d6-d5
15. c4-c5 ♘b6-d7
16. ♗f1-b5 e7-e5
17. ♘g1-e2 ♘d7-f6!
18. f2-f3 ...

Kurayan did not rectify his mistake (13.♗g5 ♘b4 14.♖c3 would have kept the position balanced), and now he has grounds for serious concern. All Black has to do is to find 18...♘h7!, opening up valuable diagonals and probing White's weaknesses on d4 and h5.

18. ... ♕d8-c7
19. d4xe5 ♘f6-d7

Nestorovic provokes this exchange to deprive his opponent of castling rights by an intermediary check. The simple 19...♕xe5 was probably stronger.

20. ♗b5xd7 ♘b4-d3+
21. ♔e1-f1 ♕c7xd7
22. f3-f4 ♖a8-c8
23. ♘a3-b5 ♘d3xc5
24. ♗e3xc5 ♖c8xc5
25. ♘e2-d4?! ...

The players are fighting fiercely but not without mistakes. Once again the precocious Ukrainian master refuses to place his idle rook on c3, and he concedes some won territory once again.

25. ... ♖f8-c8
26. ♔f1-f2 ♗f5-g4?!

Planning a breakthrough, the Serbian player is trying to force his way through an open door. 26... ♗h6 was the right move, and White would be hurting after 27.♕f3 ♗g4 28.♕e3 ♖c2+! 29.♘xc2 ♖xc2+ 30.♔g1 ♖e2 31.♕c1 ♕e7.

27. ♕d1-d2 f7-f6
28. e5-e6! ♗g4xe6
29. ♖g3xg6?! ...

Kurayan misinterprets this pawn sacrifice as a prelude to exchanging blows, but actually Nestorovic is right here. Whille after 29.♖e1! ♗g4 30.♕xa5 White would have won back the pawn and doubled rooks along the open e-file just as effectively as Black had along the c-file.

29. ... ♗e6-f5
30. ♖g6xg7+ ♔g8xg7
31. ♘b5-d6 ♗f5-e4!
32. ♘d6xc8 ♕d7-g4!
33. ♖h1-h2 ♖c5xc8
34. g2-g3 ♔g7-h7
35. ♕d2-e1 ♖c8-g8

36. ♕e1-e3 ♕g4-d1
37. ♘d4-e2 ♖g8-c8

Nestorovic handled this part of the game, starting on move 27, impeccably. The black queen has burst into enemy camp and is looking to torture the white monarch any way it can: 38.♘c3 ♕c2+ 39.♘e2 ♕b2! or 38.♖g2 ♕h1! 39.♖g1 d4!!. The young Ukrainian master charges head-on, desperately attempting a breakthrough.

38. g3-g4 h5xg4

Black, presumably plagued by time pressure, missed a killing rook maneuver: ♖c8-c2-d2-d3. The same sequence will be possible on the next move, although it is slightly less potent.

39. ♖h2-g2 ♖c8-e8?!
40. ♖g2xg4 ♗e4-g6
41. ♖g4-g1 ♕d1xg1+
42. ♘e2xg1 ♖e8xe3
43. ♔f2xe3 ♗g6-c2
44. ♔e3-d4 ♗c2xb3
45. ♘g1-e2 ♗b3xa4
46. ♔d4xd5 ...

Black was lucky enough to pick up two of his rival's pawns, but one significant factor making a draw more likely is a1 being a dark square. Nestorovic will not push the b-pawn until he can draw one of White's pieces to the kingside.

46. ... ♔h7-g6
47. ♘e2-g3 b7-b5
48. h4-h5+ ♔g6-h6
49. ♔d5-e6 ♗a4-b3
50. ♔e6xf6 a5-a4
51. ♘g3-f5+ ♔h6xh5
52. ♘f5-d4 ♗b3-c4
53. ♔f6-e5 a4-a3?

Only this hasty move dashes Black's chances. He needed to play 53...♗d3! 54.♘xb5 ♗xb5 55.♔d4 a3 56.♔c3 ♗a4, cutting off the king's retreat route.

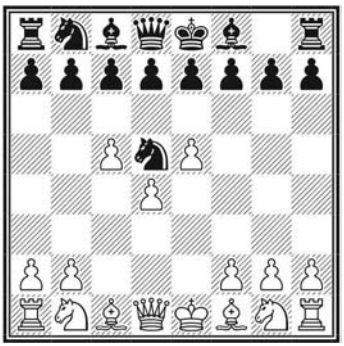
54. ♘d4-c2 a3-a2
55. ♔e5-d4 ♔h5-g4
56. ♔d4-c3 ♔g4xf4
57. ♔c3-b2 ♔f4-e4
58. ♘c2-a3 ♔e4-d3
59. ♘a3xb5 ♗c4xb5
60. ♔b2xa2

½ - ½

Chapter 22. 5.d4

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
4. c4-c5 ♘b6-d5
5. d2-d4 ...

A relatively rare move — it is as though White does not want to commit to 5.♘c3 or 5.♗c4. Naturally, there is some logic behind supporting one's advanced pawns.



5. ... d7-d6

Black could and should consider 5...b6!?, aiming to make the pawn chains asymmetrical. Then the fianchettoed bishop would prop up Black's centralized knight nicely, which cannot be said about the main lines. Miller – Y.Zilberman (Haifa 2009) reflected the spirit of this system with gradual equalizing: 6.cb ab 7.♗c4 ♗b7 8.♘e2 e6 9.0-0 ♗e7 10.♘bc3 0-0 11.♗xd5 ♗xd5 12.♘xd5 ed 13.♘f4 c6 14.♕g4 f5 15.♕g3 ♘a6 16.♗d2 ♘c7.

6. c5xd6 ...

This exchange is probably necessary because if 6.♗c4 de 7.de e6 then the d-file would open up, which would play into Black's hands.

6. ... e7xd6

The alternative capture 6...cxd6 leads to a well-trodden variation in the Sicilian Defense: 1.e4 c5 2.c3 ♘f6 3.e5 ♘d5 4.d4 cd 5.cd d6.

7. ♘g1-f3 ...

After 7.♗c4 ♘b6 8.♗b3 de White can avoid any unfavorable queen exchanges without dropping a pawn. However, in the 9.♕h5 ♗b4+ 10.♗d2 ♕e7 11.de g6 12.♕e2 ♘c6 13.f4 ♗f5 variation, Black activates his pieces nicely, and the dents in his kingside are not significant because he is intending to castle long. It is best to develop the bishop by opting for a different move order: 7.♕b3 de 8.♗c4 c6 9.de ♗b4+ 10.♗d2 ♕e7 (10... ♕b6!?) 11.♘f3 ♗xd2+ 12.♘bxd2 ♘f4 13.0-0 (Maciejewski – Zelcic, Belgorod 1991) 13...b5 14.♗d3 ♗e6 15.♕c2 ♘xd3 16.♕xd3 0-0 with a roughly equal position.

7. ... d6xe5

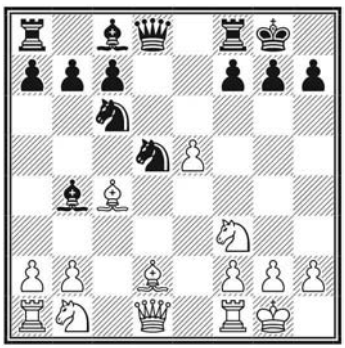
It may make sense to commit to a particular pawn structure in the center. After 7...♗e7 8.♘c3 c6 9.♗e2 0-0 10.0-0 ♘xc3 11.bc ♗f5 12.♕b3 ♕b6 13.♗a3 c5 Sveshnikov – Shamkovich, Hastings 1978, White can win a pawn scot-free — 14.ed ♗xd6 15.dc ♗xc5 16.♗xc5 ♕xc5 17.♕xb7 ♘d7 18.♘d4. However, if 12...b6 (keeping a close watch over d6) then Black would have kept his fortress intact. In the 9.♗d3 ♘xc3 10.bc ♗g4 11.0-0 de 12.de?! ♘d7 13.♕e2 ♕a5 14.♖e1 (Kantans – Chetverik, Neustadt 2014) 14...♗xf3 15.gf ♘c5 16.♗e3 ♖d8 17.♗xc5 ♕xc5 variation White does not have any compensation for his split pawns, so he should have fought for the initiative with 12.♖e1! ♘d7 13.h3 ♗xf3 14.♕xf3.

8. d4xe5 ...

After 8.♘xe5 it is not too easy to

compensate for having an isolated pawn by the initiative. For example, 8...♗b4+ 9.♗d2 0-0 10.♗e2 ♘d7 11.♘d3 (dropping back to f3 is more desirable) 11...♗d6 12.♘c3 ♘7b6 13.♘e4 ♘c4 (13...♕h4!?) 14.♗g5 ♗e7 15.♘dc5 ♗xg5 16.♗xc4 b6 17.♕h5 bc 18.♕xg5 ♘b6 19.♗d3 Grosar – Bulic, Croatia 2007, and Black had no justifiable reason to refuse capturing on d4.

8.	**...**	**♗f8-b4+**
9.	**♗c1-d2**	**0-0**
10.	**♗f1-c4**	**♘b8-c6**
11.	**0-0**	**...**



Is the e5-pawn a thorn in Black's side or a liability for White? In the 11...♗xd2 12.♕xd2 ♘b6 13.♗b5 ♕xd2 14.♘bxd2 ♘e7 variation it is neither, and play is equal. After 11...♗e6 12.a3 in Ali Marandi – Schleining, Ankara 2010, Black missed a decent exchange — 12... ♗xd2 13.♕xd2 ♘e3!, and the position is equal, too.

Taylor points out a variation leading to a multitude of simplifications: 11...♗g4 12.h3 (12.♖e1?! ♘f4!) 12...♗xf3 13.♕xf3 ♗xd2 14.♘xd2 (14.♕xd5 ♗f4) 14...♘xe5 15.♕xd5 ♕xd5 16.♗xd5 ♖ad8 17.♗xb7 ♖xd2 – Black's active rook makes up for the fact that White's bishop overpowers Black's knight.

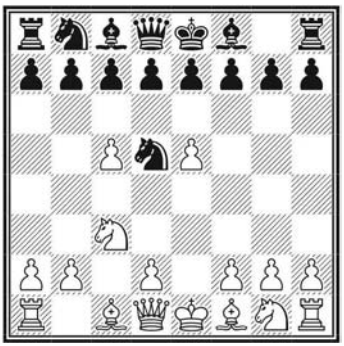
There is no reason for Black to aim for a Sicilian with 2.c3 (rather controversial, by the way)to achieve an equal position after 5.d4. He has a few solid lines of defense, most notably 5...b6!?.

Chapter 23. 5.♘c3 ♘xc3

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
4.	**c4-c5**	**♘b6-d5**
5.	**♘b1-c3**	**...**

Diagram

First and foremost, we shall take a look at White's knight challenging Black's. We shall weigh in on 5.♗c4 in Chapters 26 and 27.



5. ... ♘d5xc3

5...c6 will be analyzed in Chapter 24 and 5...e6 will make an appearance in Chapter 25. At first it is useful to see what happens in the event of an exchange, doubling White's pawns.

6. d2xc3 ...

White should open up some files closer to the center, not ones on the periphery, like in the 6.bc line. The 6...d6 7.cd ed 8.♘f3 de 9.♘xe5 ♗d6 10.♘c4 0-0 12.♘xd6 ♕xd6 13.♗e2 ♖e8 14.0-0 ♗e6 variation in which White gains the bishop pair is noteworthy, because his bishops and brothers-in-arms lack the mobility possessed by Black's pieces.

6. ... ♘b8-c6

Game 24 was pretty one-sided, but it demonstrates the extent of Black's troubles, if he plays 6... e6, rather adeptly. 6...d5 and 6...d6 lines coincide in the event of 7.cd, which seems to be the most precise reply in both cases. Bagirov's recommendation 8.♗c4, in response to 7...ed, does not impress Houdini at all: 8...♕e7!? 9.♘f3 ♘c6 10.0-0 ♘xe5 11.♖e1 ♘xf3+ 12.gf ♗e6 13.♗xe6 fe 14.♕b3 0-0-0 15.♖xe6 ♕d7, and White's fractured pawns clearly hurt his position. White should resort to a different setup: 8.♘f3 ♗e7 9.♗e3 0-0 10.♕c2 and 11.♖d1 with slightly better prospects.

7. ♘g1-f3 ...

7...b6 8.cb ab 9.♗c4 e6 is a solid reply to 7.♗f4, which we shall consider with the 5.♗c4 e6 6.♘c3 ♘xc3 7.dc ♘c6 8.♗f4 b6 9.cb ab move order.

7. ... e7-e6

If 7...d6 then apart from an exchange White should take note of 8.♗b5, damaging Black's pawn structure.

8. ♗c1-e3 ...

Evgeny Sveshnikov preferred 8.b4 here. Naturally, if 8...d6?! 9.♗g5 ♗e7 10.♗xe7 ♔xe7 Sveshnikov – Ara Minasian, Yerevan 1996, Black has to nurse his weak square, which costs him dearly. 11.ed+ cd 12.b5 ♘a5 13.♕d4 f6 14.♖d1 d5 15.♗d3 favors White; the venomous 11.♕c1!? (so as to keep the queens on the board after 11...de? 12.b5) also would force Black to rack his brains.

However, Sveshnikov – Caspi (Tel Aviv 2011) is rather thought-provoking: 8...b6 9.cb ab 10.b5 ♘b8 (shifting the knight to g6 via e7 is even stronger) 11.♗d3 ♗b7 12.0-0 ♗e7 13.♘d4 d6 14.♕g4!? de 15.♘xe6 fe 16.♖d1 ♔f8 (16...

♘d7!?), and the complications favor Black. It seems like Mr. Sveshnikov has been robbed of his trump card, and he cannot refute the Alekhine Defense, which he considered to be unsound.

8. ... b7-b6

Absolutely necessary. After 8...♗e7 9.♗b5! Black would be struggling more and if 9...d6 10.♗xc6+ bc 11.♕a4 ♕d7 12.ed cd 13.0-0-0 he'd find himself in a nearly critical position.

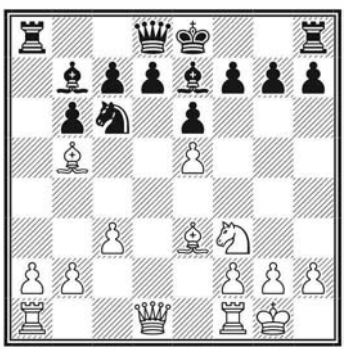
9. c5xb6 a7xb6

10. ♗f1-b5 ...

In Gukhvat – Zilberman (Haifa 2008) White placed his bishop on the tenuous e4-square: 10.♗d3 ♗a6 11.♗e4 ♗b7 12.♕c2 h6 13.h4 ♗e7 14.♖h3 ♕c8 15.♖g3 ♔f8 16.♔f1 d5 17.♗g6! ♘d8 (17...fxg6?? 18.♕xg6 ♖g8 19.♗xh6!) 18.♔g1 c5 19.♗h5 ♗c6. Eventually, the bishop started to create some threats, but 14...d5 would have spoiled Black's attack.

10. ... ♗c8-b7

11. 0-0 ♗f8-e7



In Biro – Chetverik (Hungary 1997) after 12.♗d3 ♖a5 (12...f6?! 13.ef ♗xf6 14.♘g5! ♗xg5 15.♕h5+ g6? 16.♗xg6+ hg 17.♕xh8+ ♔f7 18.♕h7+ ♔f8 19.f4, winning) 13.♗e4 ♕a8 14.b4 ♖xa2 15.♖xa2 ♕xa2 16.♕d3 f5?! 17.ef ♗xf6 18.♖d1 d6 19.♗xb6! d5 20.♗xc7 ♕a4 21.♕c2 ♕xc2 22.♗xc2 ♔d7 23.♗g3 ♗xc3 24.b5 ♘b4 25.♗b1 White gained an advantage thanks to his energetic play and converted it. 16...♕a4 (17.♖d1? ♘xb4! 18.cb ♗xe4) calls relocating the bishop, and thereby losing a tempo, in question.

Zavgorodniy attacked Borichev's kingside (Alushta 2002): 12.♕d2 0-0 13.♖fd1 ♕b8 14.♗g5 ♖d8 15.♗xc6 dc 16.♕f4 ♖xd1+ 17.♖xd1 ♕e8 18.♕h4 ♖d8! 19.♖e1?! (White should have just exchanged rooks) 19...♗xg5 20.♘xg5 h6 21.♘e4 c5, but he did not make any progress. White should have activated his queen, sliding across the light squares with the bishop: 12.♕d3 0-0 13.♖fd1 d5 14.ed cd 15.♕e4 ♕c7 16.♕g4 ♖ad8 17.♗d3 ♘e5 18.♘xe5 de 19.♕c4 Thorhallsson – Gausel, Reykjavik 1997. However, an exchange of queens would have saved Black some serious trouble.

Game 24
D.Campora – J.Gomez Feria
Seville 1999

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6

2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5

3. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
4. c4-c5 ♘b6-d5
5. ♘b1-c3 ♘d5xc3
6. d2xc3 e7-e6?!



Black has neglected the e5-pawn, so White can roll his queen out to the kingside.

7. ♕d1-g4! ...

7.♗e3 b6 8.cb ab 9.♘f3 ♘c6 overlaps with the main line (6... ♘c6).

7. ... ♘b8-c6

7...f5 8.ef ♕xf6 compromises Black's position, without offering the slightest retribution. For instance, 9.♗d3 ♘c6 10.♘f3 g6 11.♗g5 ♕g7 12.♗e3 d6 13.cxd6 cd 14.0-0 ♗e7 15.♗c4 e5 16.♕e4 Ris – Adly, Enschede 2008, and Black is ailed by numerous positional defects and his vulnerable king.

8. ♘g1-f3 b7-b6

8...h6 keeps the bishop off g5, but it impedes Black's development. After 9.♗b5 ♘e7 10.0-0 b6 11.cb ab 12.♖d1 the queen's bishop will continue to sit at home, unless Black plays the weakening c7-c6.

9. ♗c1-g5 ♘c6-e7
10. c5-c6! d7-d5

The Spanish amateur probably was not familiar with Utiatsky – V.Bagirov (USSR 1971) in which the latter would have faced some real problems after 10...dxc6 11.♖d1 ♗d7 12.♗a6 h6 if his opponent had found 13.♗xe7 ♕xe7 14.0-0 g5 15.♕e4, intending ♗a6-b7xc6.

11. 0-0-0 ...

If 11.b4! h6 12.♗xe7 ♕xe7 13.♕d4 g6 14.a4 then Black's queenside would be under enormous pressure, so 10...d5 does not improve Bagirov's continuation at all. The Argentinian GM was not as cruel, opting to squeeze his opponent slowly to death.

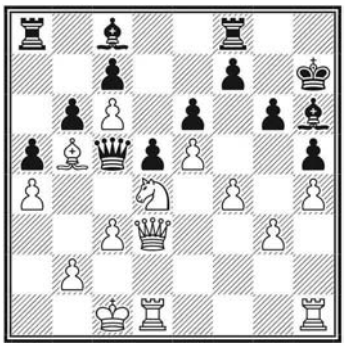
11. ... h7-h6
12. ♗g5xe7 ♕d8xe7
13. h2-h4 ♕e7-c5
14. ♘f3-d4 h6-h5
15. ♕g4-g3 a7-a5
16. a2-a4 g7-g6

The queen's bishop can defend somehow. After 16...♗a6 17.♗xa6 ♖xa6 18.f4 g6 19.♕d3 ♖a8 20.♘xe6! ♕xc6 21.♕xd5! the battle is over.

17. f2-f4 ♗f8-g7
18. ♗f1-b5 0-0

18...♗a6 19.♗xa6 ♖xa6 20.♘xe6! fe 21.♕xg6+ ♔f8 22.♕xe6 is not that bad, but Black still has not solved all of his problems.

19. ♕g3-d3 ♗g7-h6
20. g2-g3 ♔g8-h7



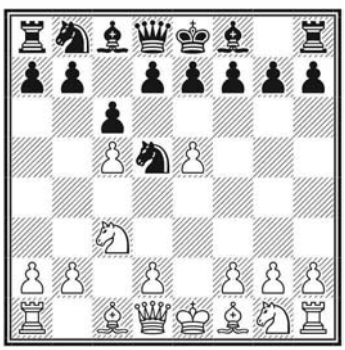
What a spectacular position! Black waits idly and wistfully for White to crash through with g3-g4.

21. ♖d1-e1 ♕c5-e7
22. ♔c1-b1 ♔h7-g8
23. ♖h1-h 2♖a8-a7
24. ♔b1-a1 ♖a7-a8
25. ♕d3-e2 ♖f8-e8
26. ♗b5-d3 ♕e7-f8
27. ♖h2-g2 ♔g8-h8
28. g3-g4 h5xg4
29. ♖g2xg4 ♕f8-e7
30. ♖e1-g1 ♖e8-f8
31. h4-h5 f7-f5
32. e5xf6 ♖f8xf6
33. ♕e2-e5
1-0

Black should use Sveshnikov – Caspi and Thorhalsson – Gausel as a guideline, and then the seemingly dangerous line involving an exchange of knights would be rehabilitated. Black must fianchetto his light-squared bishop without delay!

Chapter 24. 5.♘c3 c6

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
4. c4-c5 ♘b6-d5
5. ♘b1-c3 c7-c6



5...e6 is played much more often, but it can easily transpose back to 6.♘xd5 cd 7.d4 d6 8.cd cd 9.♘f3 ♘c6 (as is the case with 6.d4 and 6.♘f3).

6. ♗f1-c4 ...

Most often, this move generates more exciting struggle than 5...e6.

6. ... d7-d6

In reply to 6...♘xc3 White should not capture on c3 with the b-pawn because of 7...♕a5!. In Abbasov – K.Drozdowski (Moscow 2012) Black obtained a strategically superior position after 8.♕f3 (8.♕b3 leads to similar variations)

8...e6 9.d4 b6 10.cb ab 11.♘e2 d6 12.♗f4 d5 13.♗d3 ♗a6 14.0-0 ♗e7 15.♗xa6 ♕xa6. But in the event of 7.dc White has better chances: 7... b6 8.cb ab 9.♕h5 e6 10.♘f3 or 7... d5 8.exd6 ed 9.♕e2+ ♕e7 10.cd ♕xe2+ 11.♘xe2 ♗xd6 12.♗f4 ♗xf4 13.♘xf4 0-0 14.0-0-0.

After 6...e6 7.d4 b6 play generally follows a typical scenario that suits Black: 8.cb ab 9.♘f3 ♗e7 10.0-0 ♗a6 11.♗xa6 ♘xa6 12.♘e4 0-0 13.a3 f5 14.ef gf (14...♗xf6 is slightly more precise) 15.♕d3 (15.♗h6 ♖f7 16.♖e1 provides White with some interesting play) 15...♔h8 16.♘c3 ♘ac7 17.♘d2 ♖g8 18.♘xd5 ♘xd5 19.♘e4 ♕e8, and Black shifts the queen to the kingside and takes over the initiative, Malik – Konopka, Ostrava 2010.

Nevertheless, Black is reluctant to expose d6, because in this line the white knight can land there. After 6...e6 7.♘e4!? b6 8.♘d6+ ♗xd6 9.cd 0-0 10.♘f3 f6 11.d4 ♗a6 12.b3 fe 13.♗g5 ♕e8 14.♘xe5 ♖f5 15.h4 (E.Sveshnikov – Clery, Cappelle-la-Grande 2009) 15...♕f8 16.♗xa6 ♘xa6 17.g4 ♖xf2 18.♘xd7 ♕f7 19.♘e5 ♕f8 play can end in a draw by repetition; however, if 15.♕d2 h6 16.♗xd5 cd 17.♗e7 then White forms 'an alpinist link' and can fight for an advantage. Nevertheless, Black is not that bad: 9...♗a6 10.d3 0-0 11.♘f3 f6! 12.0-0 c5 Zhou Yang Fan – Cox, England 2010, and now the best is 13.♗xd5 ed 14.♕b3 ♗b7 15.♖e1 with complicated play.

7. ♕d1-b3 ...

Let us check attacking the centralized knight from the other side: 7.♕f3 ♘d7 8.d4 de 9.♘xd5 cd 10.♗xd5 e6 11.♗xb7 ♗xb7 12.♕xb7 ed 13.b4 a5 14.♘f3 ab 15.0-0 ♗xc5 16.♗b2 0-0 17.♘xd4 (Tegzes – Chetverik, Budapest 1997) 17...♕f6! 18.♕xd7 ♖fd8 19.♘xe6 ♖xd7 20.♗xf6 fe. White won back the pawn, but that will not last long. It is better for him to chomp on the f7-pawn: 8.♗xd5 ♘xe5 9.♗xf7+ ♘xf7 10.d4 g6 (10... dxc5 11.dc ♕a5 12.♗e3 e5 13.♕g3 g6 is just as good) 11.cd ♕xd6 12.♘ge2 ♗g7 13.♗f4 ♕b4 14.0-0 0-0 15.♕e3 ♖e8 with an unclear position, Chekhov – K.Grigorian, Moscow 1979.

After 7.♘xd5 cd 8.♗xd5 e6 dropping the bishop back causes White to cede some control in the center after 9...de. However, 9.ed!? ed 10.d4 partially rehabilitates the double capture on d5. Black has to think about how to give the piece back. Ideally, he'd like to wreck White's pawn structure and obtain better prospects.

If 7.cd then one can follow E.Sveshnikov – Kengis (Riga 2006) perfect example: 7...ed 8.♘f3 de 9.♘xe5 ♗d6 10.d4 0-0 11.0-0 ♗e6 12.♕b3 ♗xe5 13.de ♘xc3 14.bc ♗xc4 15.♕xc4 ♘d7 16.e6, draw. Black can only gripe about one thing – if an exchange occurs on d6 it is nearly impossible for him to generate active play.

7. ... d6xe5

Undoubtedly, 7...♘d7!? (see Game 25) is more interesting and complex.

8. ♘c3xd5 c6xd5
9. ♗c4xd5 e7-e6
10. ♗d5xb7 ♗c8xb7
11. ♕b3xb7 ♕d8-d5

Looks as though 11...♘d7 12.b4 a5! is no worse, although an exchange of queens is possible in this case, too (13.c6 ♘f6 14.b5 ♖b8 15.c7 ♖xb7 16.cd♕+ ♔xd8 or 14.ba ♖b8 15.c7 ♖xb7 16.cd♕+ ♔xd8). Black maintains some practical chances, but the position remains level.

12. ♕b7-c8+ ...

Strategically speaking, after 12.♕xd5 ed White would benefit more from a pawn deficit, instead of a surplus: 13.d4!? ed 14.b4 a5 15.b5 ♗xc5 16.♘f3 0-0 17.0-0. However, White has only a tiny advantage.

12. ... ♔e8-e7

In reply to 12...♕d8 White would either drop the queen back to b7 or content himself with little after 13.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 14.♘f3 ♘c6 15.d3 ♖b8 16.b3.

13. ♕c8-c7+ ...

If 13.♘f3 ♘d7 14.♕c7 then Bagirov's recommendation 14...♕xc5 is not worthy of an exclamation point because of 15.♕xc5 ♘xc5 16.♘xe5 f6 17.d4 ♘a4 18.♘d3 with a clearly better endgame. While 14...e4 15.c6 ef 16.cd ♖d8 would definitely suit Black.

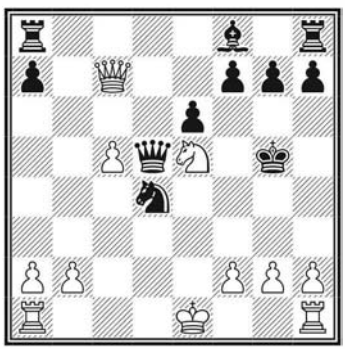
13. ... ♔e7-f6
14. d2-d4 ♘b8-c6

The queen cannot fight this battle all by itself, but soon enough the knight will join the king hunt. Let us draw our attention to a line played by two amateur players, Doerflinger – Trettin, Germany 1987: 14...exd4!? 15.♘f3 (15.♕f4+ ♔e7 16.♕f3 ♕xf3 17.♘xf3 ♘c6 18.a3 a5) 15...♗xc5 16.♗g5+ ♔g6 17.♘e5+ ♔xg5 18.f4+ ♔h6. Now gobbling up the rook, 19.♘xf7+?! ♔h5 20.♘xh8 ♘d7, would backfire on White, and it is only natural the game would end in a draw by perpetual check (19.♘g4+ ♔g6 20.♘e5+).

15. ♘g1-f3 ♘c6xd4

But not 15...♕e4+? 16.♗e3 ♘xd4 17.♘g5 ♕g6 18.f4 ♘c2+ 19.♔d2 ♘xe3 20.♕xe5+ ♔e7 Komora – Jakubek, Trencin 1995, and 21.♕c7+ ♔f6 22.♔xe3 would wrap things up right now.

16. ♗c1-g5+ ♔f6-g6
17. ♘f3xe5+ ♔g6xg5



White has enough reason to

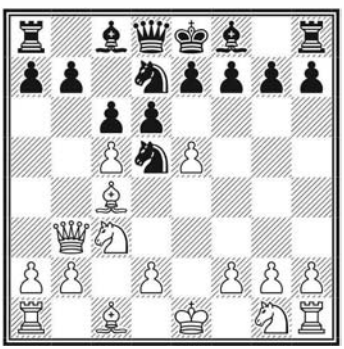
continue the fight, because he has a guaranteed draw (18.h4+ ♔f6 19.♘d7+ ♔g6 20.♘e5+). After 18.0-0 ♕xc5? 19.f4+ ♔h6 20.♘xf7+ ♔h5 21.♕b7 ♗e7 (E. Sveshnikov – Palatnik, Chelyabinsk 1971) 22.♖ac1! ♘e2++ 23.♔h1 ♘xc1 24.♕f3+ ♔g6 25.♘e5+ White wins the queen and the game. Black should continue 18... ♗xc5 19.♘xf7+ ♔f6 20.♘xh8 ♖xh8 21.♖ad1 ♖d8 Uritzky – E. Fischer, Germany 2001, hoping to compensate for his king's disquieting position by establishing a powerful presence in the center.

Game 25

D.Litvinenko – M.Chetverik

Voronezh 1983

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
4.	**c4-c5**	**♘b6-d5**
5.	**♗f1-c4**	**c7-c6**
6.	**♘b1-c3**	**d7-d6**
7.	**♕d1-b3**	**♘b8-d7!?**



White has been granted an excellent opportunity to liquidate one of his far-advanced pawns without doubling any of his pawns. If 8.cd then 8...♘xe5 9.♘xd5 cd 10.♗xd5 ♕xd6 11.d4 e6 12.♘f3 ♘d3+! 13.♕xd3 ♕xd5 could follow, and Black would increase the pressure applied on the isolated pawn. White destroyed another pawn with tempo...

8. ♘c3xd5 ♘d7xc5

...because it is already too late to start backpedalling. 8...cd?! 9.♗xd5 e6 10.♗xe6! fe 11.♕xe6+ ♕e7 12.♕xe7+ ♗xe7 13.cd ♘xe5 14.de ♘d3+ 15.♔e2 ♗f5 Schultz – Horn, Germany 1983, would not provide Black with enough compensation for the pawns.

9. ♘d5-c7+ ♔e8-d7!?

This is only shocking at first. Once you take a closer look, you realize that after 9...♕xc7 10.♗xf7+ ♔d8 the black king is deprived of castling rights, too. Black struggles to coordinate his pieces, and in the rough variation 11.♕e3 e6 12.♗h5 de 14.♗e2 ♘d7 15.♘f3 ♗e7 16.0-0 White has a long-lasting initiative.

10. ♕b3-e3 ♔d7xc7

11. ♗c4xf7 ...

The black king looks cozy on c7, so Black should at least be thinking about winning back the pawn. If 11.d4?! d5 12.♗e2 ♘e6 13.f4 g6 14.g4 h5 15.gh gh 16.♘f3 ♗h6 17.♘g5 ♗xg5 18.fg ♔b8 19.♗d2 h4 20.♖f1 ♖g8 21.♖xf7 ♘xg5 22.♕xg5! ♖xg5 23.♗xg5

♗e6 24.♗xe7 ♕a5+ 25.b4 ♕a3 (Dishman – Burgess, England 1999) 26.♗d6+ ♔c8 27.♖c7+ ♔d8 28.♖d1 then White obtains enough counterplay to draw after sacrificing his queen, according to Houdini at least. Regrouping with 18...♘g7 and 19...♗e6 does not look too bad for Black either.

Malbran, an Argentinian master, opted to develop his light-squared bishop on three separate occasions. After 11...♗e6 12.♗e2 ♘d7 13.♘f3 ♗d5 14.♗d2 h6 15.♖c1 g5 16.h3 ♗g7 17.b4 (Lupi – Malbran, Buenos Aires 2002) 17...♖c8 18.b5 ♔b8 Black has successfully regrouped, and White has no compensation for the damage he has borne.

11. ... ♗c8-f5

Stronger than 11...♕d7 12.d4 ♕f5 13.♗c4 ♗e6 14.♗e2 ♘d7 15.♗d3 ♕f7 Thorhallsson – Burgess, Gausdal 1997. The aggressive queen has been thrown away, and White's expansion has started to make a difference.

12. ♗f7-c4 d6-d5!

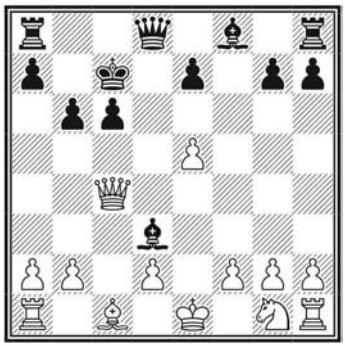
An improvement upon Chikin – Chetverik, Voronezh 1982: 12...e6?! 13.♘f3 d5 14.♗e2 ♗e7 15.♘d4 ♕d7 16.b4 ♘a4 17.♘xf5 (17.♗a3 a6 18.0-0 ♘b6 19.♖fc1 seems even better) 17...ef 18.0-0 d4 19.♕b3 ♘b6 20.b5 ♕d5 21.bc bc 22.♗f3 ♕xb3 23.ab ♘d7 24.♖e1 with an endgame advantage.

13. ♕e3xc5 b7-b6

Black rejects using the discovered attack because he wants to hold onto his e-pawn. However, after 13...e6 14.♕d4 dc 15.♕xc4 ♗d3 16.♕xe6 ♗c5 White would find it quite difficult to defend the position.

14. ♕c5-d4 d5xc4

15. ♕d4xc4 ♗f5-d3



The crux of Black's plan. By posting up on this juicy square, the bishop immobilizes both flanks and does not allow his opponent's king to find a safe haven. Litvinenko must have forgotten about a game played a few rounds earlier: 16.♕c3 (not subjecting himself to g7-g5) 16... ♕d5 17.f3 g5 18.b3?! Galanov – Chetverik, Voronezh 1983, and 18... g4! would have allowed Black to crank up the tension. 18.♘h3 and 19.♘f2 probably would have kept the position balanced.

16. ♕c4-f4 ♕d8-d5

17. f2-f3 g7-g5

18. ♕f4-e3 e7-e6

18...g4 was worthy of a closer look. For instance, 19.♘e2 ♗xe2 20.♕xe2 gf 21.gf ♗g7, winning back the pawn and obtaining excellent prospects.

19. ♕e3xg5 ♖a8-e8
20. ♘g1-h3?! ...

Litvinenko overlooks Black's tactical resources, takes a jab, and finds himself in a critical position shortly thereafter. After 20.♘e2 ♗xe2 21.♔xe2 ♗c5 22.♕h4 ♖d8 23.♕e4 ♕xe4+ 24.fe White does not have any of his pieces developed, but his two-pawn advantage should help him salvage the game.

20. ... ♖h8-g8!
21. ♕g5-e3 ...

Obviously, White cannot capture the rook because of mate in two.

21. ... ♗f8-c5
22. ♘h3-f4 ♗c5xe3
23. ♘f4xd5+ e6xd5
24. d2xe3 ♖g8xg2
25. f3-f4 ♖e8-g8

As a result of these exchanges, White is up a pawn, but has an utterly hopeless position. Fate had it that the bishop broke free, although it did not do any harm to Black, but White's rooks stood still until he was forced to capitulate.

26. b2-b3 ♖g2-e2+
27. ♔e1-d1 ♖g8-g2
28. ♗c1-a3 c6-c5

There was no need to launch a pawn storm. After 28...♗c2+ 29.♔c1 ♗e4 Black would snap up the h1-rook in no time.

29. h2-h4 h7-h5
30. b3-b4 c5-c4
31. b4-b5 ♖e2xe3
32. ♗a3-d6+ ♔c7-d7
33. ♗d6-b8 ♔d7-c8
34. ♗b8-d6 d5-d4
35. a2-a4 ♗d3-e2+
36. ♔d1-c1 ♖e3-c3+
37. ♔c1-d2 ♗e2-f3+
38. ♔d2-e1 ♖c3-c2
0-1

It appears as though 7.♕b3, aiming to heat things up, can be refuted by the chilling 7...♘d7!?. It is hard to believe White has any viable options in the 7.♕f3 line, although there is not much theory on it, so White has to put up with the dry 7.cd variation.

Chapter 25. 5.♘c3 e6

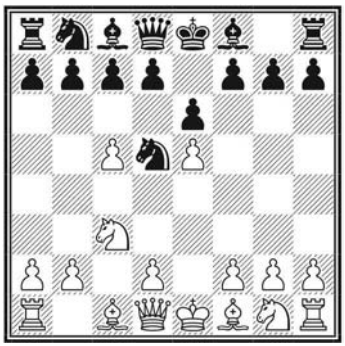
1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
4. c4-c5 ♘b6-d5
5. ♘b1-c3 e7-e6

Diagram

Threatening to win a pawn and clear the way for the queen, which is no less important than the d8-a5 diagonal (in the event of 5...c6).

6. ♘c3xd5 ...

6.♗c4 has been analyzed with the 5.♗c4 e6 6.♘c3 move order. Various lines following 6.d4 will be tied together in Game 26.



When examining 6.♕g4 it is useful to recall Oim—Mikenas, Palanga 1961: 6...h5! 7.♕c4 (7.♕g3?! ♘b4!) 7...d6!? 8.cd cd 9.♘xd5 ed 10.♕xd5 ♘c6 11.♗b5 ♗d7 12.ed ♖h6 (it is as though Houdini will have no problem quelling Black's initiative, but it all works out smoothly!) 13.♗c4 ♖e6+ 14.♔d1 ♕f6 (14...♘e5!?) 15.♘f3 0-0-0 16.♕g5 ♖xd6 17.♕xf6 ♖xf6 18.d3 ♗g4 19.♗g5 ♖xf3! 20.gf ♗xf3+ 21.♔c2 f6 22.♗e3 ♗xh1 23.♖xh1 a6, and Black is just as good in the endgame, if not better. If 13.♘e2, then 13...♖xd6 14.♕xh5 ♕a5!, planning a7-a6. If 13.♘f3 ♖xd6 14.♕xh5 then 14...♕a5? is stomped out by a powerful combination: 15.0-0! a6 16.♖e1+ ♔d8 17.d4 ♕xb5 18.♕xf7. The right continuation is 14...g6 15.♕g5 ♕xg5 16.♘xg5 ♖d5 17.♗xc6 ♗xc6 18.♘f3 ♖b5, and Black has enough compensation to maintain the balance. 7...♘xc3 (instead of 7...d6) 8.dc b6 9.cb ab 10.♕f4 ♗b7, giving Black great prospects, works quite well against an early ♕d1-g4.

6. ... e6xd5

7. d2-d4 d7-d6

If 7...b6 then we transpose into the position arising in Game 26.

8. c5xd6 c7xd6

9. ♘g1-f3 ♘b8-c6

9...♗g4 may not equalize because of 10.♕b3 ♘d7 11.♕xb7 de 12.a3!?. But Black should not push his luck.

10. ♗f1-d3 ...

Statistics shows that White fares poorly with 10.ed?! ♗xd6 11.♗e2 0-0 12.0-0. 12...♕b6, aiming at a2 and d4, is the most challenging reply, like Smejkal played in the source game. If White keeps the bishop off g4 then it will hop over to e4 via f5.

10.♗e2, without exchanging in the center, is worthy of a closer look. After 10...♗e7 11.0-0 0-0 12.♕b3 de 13.de d4 14.♖d1 ♕c7 15.♗f4 ♗e6 16.♕a4 ♕b6 or 12.♗f4 ♗f5 13.♕d2 ♖c8 14.♖fc1 a6 15.ed ♗xd6 16.♘e5 ♗xe5 17.de ♕b6 Vezzosi – Solozhenkin, Reggio Emilia 1999, the central passed pawn immobilizes White's pieces and essentially equalizes.

10...de is no worse. If 11.de ♗b4+ 12.♗d2 ♕a5 13.a3 ♗xd2+ 14.♕xd2 ♕xd2+ 15.♔xd2 ♗g4 16.♖he1 0-0 then the players have reached a calm, equal position. Holmsten and ♘orri (Finland 2007) agreed a truce, which should come as no surprise, after 11.♘xe5 ♗d6 (11...♗b4+!? 12.♗d2 ♕b6) 12.0-0 0-0 13.♗f3 ♘xe5 14.de

♗xe5 15.♗xd5 ♕f6 16.♕b3 ♖d8 17.♗e3 ♗xb2 18.♖ad1 ♗g4 19.f3 ♗e6 20.♗xe6 ♕xe6 21.♕xe6 fe 22.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 23.♗xa7 b5 plus another dozen moves or so, with no real difference. If 17...♗xh2+!? 18.♔xh2 ♕e5+ 19.♔g1 ♖xd5 20.♗xa7! then the number of pawns is the same, but nevertheless, Black can make a claim at gaining an advantage.

10. ... ♗f8-e7

If 10...de 11.de ♗b4+ 12.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 13.♕xd2 ♗g4 then White will probably have to drop the bishop back to e2, thereby losing a tempo. Therefore, 11.♘xe5 ♗b4+ 12.♗d2 ♗xd2+ (12...♕g5 13.♘xc6 ♕xg2 14.♕e2+ ♗e6 15.0-0-0 ♗xd2+ 16.♕xd2 bc 17.♕f4 with the initiative) 13.♕xd2 0-0 14.♘xc6 bc 15.0-0 ♕f6 16.♖fe1 ♗d7 17.♖e5 is stronger, since White has slightly better chances, Zelic – Z.Varga, Pula 1998.

11. 0-0 ...

11.♗f4 de 12.♘xe5 ♕a5+ 13.♗d2 ♕b6 would force White to play the somewhat passive 14.♘xc6 bc 15.♗c3. However, he could consider a controversial pawn sacrifice. 12...♕b6 13.0-0 ♗e6 14.♘xc6 bc 15.♕c2 ♗f6 16.♗e5 ♗xe5 17.de g6 18.h4 ♖c8 19.♖ad1 ♖c7 20.h5 (Delorme – Spraggett, Andorra 2009) 20...gh 21.♗xh7 c5 is good, too, because centralizing the king does not put it at risk.

11. ... 0-0

In Dzubasz – Chetverik (Budapest 1997) White maintained a slight edge after 11...♗g4 12.♖e1 0-0 13.h3 ♗h5 14.♗f5 ♗xf3 15.♕xf3 ♘xd4 16.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 17.♕d3+ ♔g8 18.♕xd4 de 19.♕xe5 ♗f6 20.♕f5 ♕a5 21.♖d1 ♖fd8 22.♗g5 ♗xg5 23.♕xg5. Pinning the piece after ♗f1-d3 is seen quite often, but it hardly ever allows Black to achieve equality.

12. h2-h3 ♗c8-e6

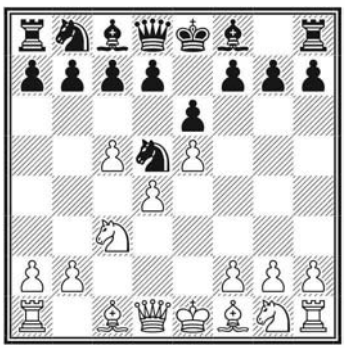


Black does not encounter any real problems, no matter how the tension in the center resolves itself: 13.♗f4 de 14.♘xe5 ♗f5 15.♘xc6 bc 16.♕d2 ♖e8 or 13.ed ♕xd6 14.♖e1 ♖fe8 15.a3 ♗f6 16.♗e3 ♕d7 17.♕b1 h6 18.b4 ♖ac8 19.♖a2 ♘e7 Fries Nielsen – C.Hansen, Silkeborg 1980.

Game 26
E.Sveshnikov – A.Beletsky
Togliatti 2001

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5

3. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
4. c4-c5 ♘b6-d5
5. ♘b1-c3 e7-e6
6. d2-d4 ...



6. ... b7-b6!?

Vladimir Bagirov made a sizable contribution to theory of this continuation, but he only resorted to a bishop fianchetto with the 6.♘xd5 ed 7.d4 move order. The 6...d6 7.cd cd 8.♘f3 variation comes out of Sicilian Defense lines so often (1.e4 c5 2.c3 ♘f6 3.e5 ♘d5 4.d4 cd 5.♘f3 e6 6.cd d6 7.♘c3) that one should investigate theory on that opening for deeper analysis.

After 6...♘xc3 7.bc b6 Sveshnikov had tested 8.♕g4!? bc 9.♗g5 ♗e7 10.♗xe7 ♕xe7 11.♕xg7 ♖f8 12.♘f3 cd with different results. Now 13.♗e2 ♘c6 14.♘g5 ♕c5 15.0-0 ♕xe5 16.♕xe5 ♘xe5 17.cd ♘c6 led to an endgame favorable for Black, while 13.♘xd4 would have generated complications with equal possibilities as in the Houdini's variation 13...♕a3!? 14.♕g3 ♗b7 15.♗e2 ♗xg2!? 16.♘b5 ♕b2 17.♕xg2 ♕xa1+ 18.♔d2 ♕xa2+ 19.♔e3 ♘c6.

8.cb ab is seen much more often. A standard white queen's sortie gave Black a free hand after 9.♕g4 d5 10.♘h3 ♕d7 11.♘f4 g6 12.♗e2 ♗a6 13.0-0 ♘c6 14.♗xa6 ♖xa6 in Cherniaev—Luther, Gibraltar 2003. Kuczynski (Black) took over the initiative, too, against Rozentalis, Bydgoszcz 2001: 9.♘f3 ♗b7 10.♗d3 d6 11.0-0 ♗e7 12.♕e2 ♘d7 13.♖d1 ♖a5 14.♗f4 ♕a8 15.♘e1 0-0 16.♗c2 de 17.de ♘c5 18.♖d4 ♖d8 19.h4 ♖a3. However, 14.♘d2 promised the knight a better career than in the cited fragment.

7. ♘c3xd5 e6xd5
8. ♗c1-e3 ...

White keeps his opponent's position a bit cramped. An exchange on b6 would not trip Black up: 8.cb ab 9.♘f3 d6 10.♗g5 ♗e7 11.♗xe7 ♕xe7 12.♗e2 de 13.♘xe5 f6 14.♘f3 ♗a6 15.♔f1 0-0 16.♗xa6 ♖xa6 17.g3 ♕d7 18.♔g2 c5 19.♖e1 c4 20.a3 ♘c6 21.♕d2 b5, and Black got active on the queenside in the time White spent on castling by hand in Filipowicz – Palkovi, Rijeka 2001. A clumsy-looking retreat 14.♘d3 would have allowed White to castle, at the very least.

8. ... b6xc5
9. d4xc5 c7-c6
10. ♕d1-a4 ...

Pre-computer theory of this sideline is grounded on the games by Hennings, a German master. In the most noteworthy encounter

Black had to give up his knight after he started grabbing pawns: 10.♗d3 ♘a6 11.♖c1 ♕a5+ (11... ♘b4!? 12.♗b1? ♘xa2!) 12.♗d2 ♕xa2 13.♖a1 ♕xb2 14.♗xa6 ♗xa6 15.♖xa6 ♕xe5+ 16.♘e2 ♗xc5 17.0-0 0-0 18.♘f4 ♗b6 19.♖e1 ♕f5 20.♕e2 Hennings – Smejkal, Kapfenberger 1970. After 20... h6 21.♖a3 ♖fe8 22.♕xe8+ ♖xe8 23.♖xe8+ ♔h7 24.♖f3 White's rooks were superior to Black's queen, but after 20...f6 it would have been anyone's game.

White continued 10.♕d2 ♗e7 11.♘f3 0-0 12.♗d3 ♗a6 13.0-0 ♗xd3 14.♕xd3 a5 15.♖ac1 ♘a6 16.♗d4 ♘c7 17.g3 ♕b8 18.h4 ♕b5 19.♕e3 ♘e6 20.h5 h6 21.♖c2 ♖ab8 22.♔g2 ♕a4 23.b3 ♕b4 in Sveshnikov – Shabalov, Liepaja 2004. Launching an attack is out of the question for White, and he struggles to extinguish his opponent's counterplay on the queen's wing. White should have considered 13.♗f5!?, looking to weaken Black's pawn shield around his king.

10. ... a7-a5
11. ♘g1-f3 ♗c8-a6
12. ♖a1-c1 ...

The queen did not slide over to a4 just to protect the c5-pawn after 12.♗xa6 ♘xa6 13.♕a3. However, now White must spend some time on castling by hand.

12. ... ♗a6xf1
13. ♔e1xf1 ♘b8-a6
14. g2-g3 ♖a8-b8
15. ♕a4-c2 ♖b8-b5
16. ♔f1-g2 ...

This is consistent with his plan, and psychologically speaking, this is a sound move. If 16.a4 ♖b7 17.♔g2 ♕b8 18.♖b1 then White's doomed to defend passively.

16. ... ♗f8xc5
17. a2-a4 ♗c5xe3
18. a4xb5 ♘a6-b4
19. ♕c2-f5 ♗e3xc1
20. ♖h1xc1 g7-g6

Black could have waited with forcing back the queen. For instance, if 20...0-0 21.bc dc 22.e6 g6 23.ef+ ♖xf7 24.♕e6 ♕e7 then Black has to exchange queens and has nothing better than a draw, at best.

21. ♕f5-h3 ...

The half-forced 21.♕f6 0-0 22.♘d4 ♕xf6 23.ef ♖c8 24.♖a1 cb 25.♘xb5 ♖b8 26.♘c7 ♘c6 27.♘xd5 ♖xb2 28.♘e7+ ♘xe7 29.fe ♖e2 30.♖xa5 ♖xe7 looks like a saving grace, but it is doubtful that GM was thinking about how to salvage a game against a weaker opponent. Therefore, he decides to avoid an exchange of queens and storm his opponent's fortress.

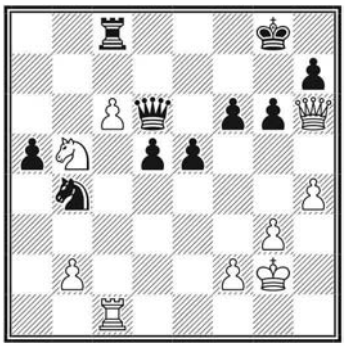
21. ... 0-0
22. ♕h3-h6 f7-f6
23. e5-e6 d7xe6

You cannot checkmate your opponent with just your queen, which can be proven by 23...cb!? 24.♘d4 ♘d3 25.♖c3 ♘e5 26.♖c5 ♖e8 27.ed ♕xd7. Black cannot get his paws on the white monarch.

24. ♘f3-d4 ♕d8-d6
25. b5xc6 ...

The tactical continuation 25.♘xc6 d4! 26.♘xd4 ♘d3 27.♖c7 ♕xc7 28.♕xf8+ ♔xf8 29.♘xe6+ ♔e7 30.♘xc7 ♔d6 wins White a pawn, but for a short while. The knight endgame definitely favors Black.

25. ... ♖f8-c8
26. h2-h4 e6-e5
27. ♘d4-b5 ...



27. ... ♕d6-b8?

Beletsky, who has removed his queen from the kingside, misses his opponent's sneaky and beautiful plan. Meanwhile, it would have been tough to pull off a win anyway. In the variations 27...♕e6 28.c7 ♕d7 29.h5 ♘d3 30.hg ♘xc1 31.gh+ ♕xh7 32.♕xf6 and 28...♕b6 29.h5 g5 30.♘a7! ♖xc7 31.♘c8! ♕b8 32.♕xf6 ♕xc8 33.h6 ♕d7 34.♕xg5+ ♔f8 35.♖xc7 ♕xc7 36.♕f6+ White has perpetual check in the bag. Black should try 27...♕e7!? (it holds f6 and g5, two key squares, for the time being) 28.c7 d4 29.h5 g5 30.♘a7 ♖xc7 31.♖xc7 ♕xc7 32.♕xf6 ♕b7+ 33.♔g1 ♕xa7. White would sweep the g5-, e5-, and d4-pawns off the board, but the knight would still be alive and kicking, which gives Black a flicker of hope.

28. h4-h5! ♖c8xc6

If 28...♕xb5 29.hg hg then the rook joins the mating attack via h1.

29. h5xg6 ♕b8-b7
30. ♘b5-d6!! ...

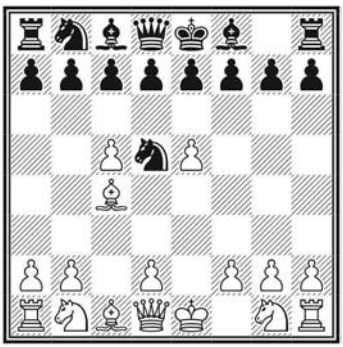
It is no wonder Black missed this! If the knight is captured, 31.♖c8+! checkmates. The queen and knight coordinate their efforts beautifully, and there is no need for any additional commentary.

30. ... ♕b7-g7
31. g6xh7+ ♕g7xh7
32. ♕h6xf6 ♖c6xc1
33. ♕f6-d8+ ♔g8-g7
34. ♕d8-e7+ ♔g7-g6
35. ♕e7-e6+ ♔g6-h5
36. ♕e6xe5+ ♔h5-g6
37. ♕e5-f5+ ♔g6-h6
38. ♕f5-f6+ ♔h6-h5
39. ♘d6-f5 ♘b4-d3
40. ♘f5-g7+
1-0

In this variation there is a clear distinction between the plans involving b7-b6 or d7-d6. Playing in the center has proven itself time in and time out, but we think that the bishop fianchetto is more interesting.

Chapter 26. 5.♗c4 without ♘b1-c3

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
4. c4-c5 ♘b6-d5
5. ♗f1-c4 ...



Played a bit more often than 5.♘c3. In this line the knight is in no hurry to get to c3.

5. ... e7-e6

5...c6 6.♘c3 was analyzed in Chapter 24, although 6.♕e2, seen in Game 27, should be considered independently. 6.d4 overlaps with other lines, but not in Schaarschmidt – Chetverik, Wunsiedel 2012: 6...b6 7.cb ab 8.♘e2 e6 9.0-0 ♗a6 10.♘d2 f6 11.♗xa6 ♘xa6 12.♘e4 f5 (12...fe 13.de ♗e7 14.f4 ♘c5 is good, too) 13.♘4c3 ♘ac7 14.♘f4 ♘xf4 15.♗xf4 b5 16.a3 ♕h4 17.♗g3 ♕g5 18.f4 ♕h6 19.♕d3 ♗e7 20.d5!? ed 21.♕xf5 g6 22.♕g4 ♖f8. White has not been able to lift the blockade, so he does not have the upper hand.

6. d2-d4 ...

6.♘c3 will be covered in Chapter 27. One cannot neglect the energetic 6.♕g4. The continuation 6...d6 7.cd cd 8.♘f3 ♘c6 9.ed ♘f6 10.♕h4 ♗xd6 11.d4 a6 12.0-0 b5 13.♗b3 (13.♗e2 is cleaner) 13...♗b7 14.♗g5 ♘a5 Scozzesi – Janev, Fourmies 2011, works just fine, and only 15.♗d1, which looks unappealing, would allow White to keep the bishop pair without ruining his pawn structure. 6...♘b4, zeroing in on the now-vulnerable c2-square, is just as good. For instance, 7.♘a3 b6 8.d4 ♗a6 9.♕e4 ♗xc4 10.♘xc4 ♘8c6 11.♘f3 (a controversial sacrifice) 11...bc 12.dc ♗xc5 13.0-0 f5 14.ef (Nurkic – Leventic, Neum 2002) 14...gf 15.a3 ♘d5 16.b4 ♗b6 17.♖e1 ♕e7 with better prospects.

6. ... b7-b6

6...d6 7.cd cd leads us back to a tabiya in the Sicilian Alapin variation: 1.e4 c5 2.c3 ♘f6 3.e5 ♘d5 4.d4 cd 5.cd d6 6.♗c4 e6.

7. c5xb6 ...

It is very rare for White to forego this pawn exchange. 7.♗xd5 ed 8.♘f3 ♗e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♘c3 c6 11.b4 ♘a6 12.a3 ♘c7 13.♖e1 ♘e6 14.♘e2 a5 15.♗e3 f6 16.ef ♖xf6 17.♘e5 ♕c7 18.♖c1 ab 19.ab bc 20.bc ♖f8 21.♘c3 ♗xc5 22.♘xd5 cd 23.♘d3 d6 24.dc d4 25.cd ♕xd6 26.♗d2 ♗b7 Torre

– Baburin, Calvia 2004, has been played before; some skirmishes in the center followed and then everything balanced out. White has to keep his eye on 9...bc 10.dc c6 and the knight hopping over to e6, via a6 and c7.

7. ... a7xb6

In Mazurczak – Kovalenko (Alushta 2011) Black equalized after 7...♘xb6 8.♗d3 ♗a6 9.♘f3 d5 10.ed ♗xd6 11.♘c3 ♗xd3 12.♕xd3 h6 13.0-0 0-0 14.♖d1 ♘c6 15.♕e4 ♘d5 16.♘xd5 ed 17.♕c2 ♕f6 18.♗e3 ♖fe8 19.♖ac1 ♖e6. Still the bishop is more often placed on the long diagonal since it is opened up by the knight's retreat. For instance, 8...♗b7 9.♘f3 c5 10.dc ♗xc5 11.♘bd2 d6 12.0-0 ♘8d7 13.♘e4 ♗xe4 14.♗xe4 d5 15.♗d3, and White has a slightly better position, Vasiukov – Losev, Moscow 2006. 9...♗xf3 10.♕xf3 ♘c6 11.♗e3 ♗b4+ 12.♘d2 f5, clamping down on White's bishops, looks more precise.

8. ♘g1-f3 ...

After 8.♗xd5 ed 9.♘c3 c6 10.♘f3 ♘a6 11.♗g5 ♗e7 12.♗xe7 ♕xe7 13.0-0 ♘c7 14.♕b3 ♖b8 15.♘d1 0-0 16.♘e3 f5 17.♕c2 g6 18.a4 ♗a6 19.♖fc1 ♘e6 Can – Topak, Konya 2011, one should not be so sure about Houdini's positive assessment of White's position. Black's pieces are well coordinated, and they are capable of putting up a good fight. It is not a bad idea to play 10...h6 first, keeping the bishop off g5, instead of 10...♘a6.

8. ... ♗c8-a6

8...♗b7 is rarely played here, but that is how Kiril Georgiev continued against Rahls, Dresden 2007: 9.0-0 ♗e7 10.♘c3 ♘xc3 11.bc 0-0 12.♖e1 d6 13.♗f4 ♘c6 14.♕e2 de 15.de?! ♖a4 16.♗g3 ♕a8 17.♗b3 ♖a3 18.♖ad1 ♘a5 19.♖d7?, and the grandmaster rejected 19...♕e8 (20.♖xc7 ♕d8) for whatever reason. Naturally, it would have been better to trade the dark-squared bishop off (15.♗xe5) instead of blocking it in with a pawn.

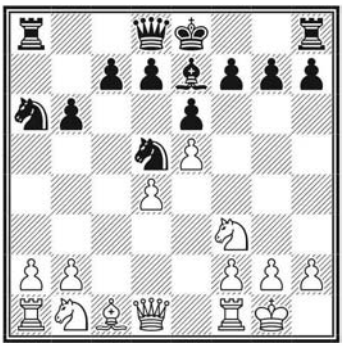
9. ♗c4xa6 ...

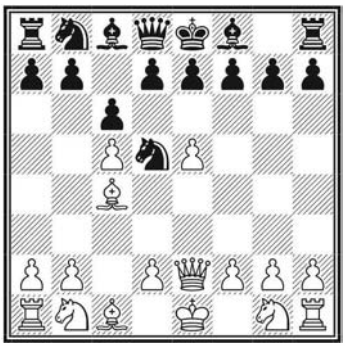
Black took over the initiative with standard play: 9.b3 ♗e7 10.0-0 b5 11.♗d3 b4 12.♕c2 ♘c6 13.♖e1 ♗xd3 14.♕xd3 ♖a7 15.♘bd2 ♕a8 16.♕c2 h6 17.♘e4 ♖a5 Fodre – Chetverik, Gyula 2003, and he broke through on the a-file fifty moves later. However, if 11.♗xd5 ed 12.♖e1 b4 13.a4 then White gets out of jail free, and Black should have played something less complicated than 10...b5.

9. ... ♘b8xa6

One should take a good hard look at Krizsany's setup against Fodre (Budapest 1995): 9...♖xa6 10.0-0 ♘c6 11.♘bd2 ♗e7 12.♘e4 ♕a8 13.a3 ♖a4 14.♗e3 b5 with better prospects.

10. 0-0 ♗f8-e7





If 11.♘c3, then 11...♘ab4, but 11.a3 would keep the knight from becoming so active. So, 11... c6, ♘a6-c7, 0-0, followed by pushing the f-pawn one or two squares forward, would seem more reasonable, and a tense battle would ensue.

Game 27

V.Potkin – S.Mamedyarov

Abu Dhabi 2005

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
4.	**c4-c5**	**♘b6-d5**
5.	**♗f1-c4**	**c7-c6**
6.	**♕d1-e2**	**...**

Diagram

The main idea of this move is to prevent Black from freeing up his position by playing d7-d6. But in doing so White has to be prepare for Black playing to win a pawn with 6...♕a5. Bagirov places a question-mark against this queen sortie, whereas Houdini is a big fan of this move. The truth is probably somewhere in the middle – White has sufficient compensation for the pawn. After 7.♘f3 ♕xc5 8.d4 ♕b4+ 9.♘bd2 d6 10.0-0 ♗g4 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♘xf3 e6 13.♘g5 ♗e7? 14.♗d2 ♕b6 15.♘xe6! Makarychev broke Alburt's defensive lines (Ashkhabad 1978). However, if 13...de 14.♗d2 ♕e7 15.de h6 16.♘f3 ♕c7, then any initiative for the pawn is imperceptible, so an objectively better continuation is 10.a3 ♕a5 11.ed ♘f4 12.♕e5 ♕xe5 13.de ♘d7 with equal chances.

6.	**...**	**e7-e6**
7.	**d2-d4**	**b7-b6**

Black's strategic concessions turn out to be minimal. White is incapable of holding on to the pawn on c5, while the hole on d6 isn't particularly important.

8. c5xb6 ...

The sacrifice with 8.♘c3 doesn't look completely sound. For example, 8...bc 9.dc ♗xc5 10.♘f3 h6 11.♘e4 ♗e7 12.0-0 ♕b6 13.b3 a5 14.a4 ♘a6 15.♗b2 ♗b7 16.♘d4 ♘c5, and Black doesn't face any threats (Smolin – Chetverik, Czestochowa 1992). Moreover, Black can vary the game, in particular by moving the knight via a6 to b4 and moving the bishop to the square vacated by the knight.

8. ... a7xb6

8...♕xb6 is hardly ever seen. The drawback of this overall acceptable capture compared with 8...ab is largely in the fact that Black also needs to bring the queen's rook into play.

9. ♘g1-h3 ...

After 9.♘f3 ♗a6 10.♗xa6 ♘xa6 11.0-0 ♗e7 12.♘c3 ♘ac7 13.♘e4 0-0 14.♘fd2 f5 15.♘g3 ♖a4 16.♘b3 ♕a8 17.a3 ♕a6 Black's pieces are set up ideally (Hombac – Drazic, Ljubljana 1998). The shuffling of the knights hasn't brought any gains, while White is now lacking a good plan.

9. ... d7-d6

The game Soltis – Alburt (New York 1988) continued 9...♗a6 10.♗xa6 ♗b4+ 11.♗d2 ♘xa6 12.0-0 0-0 13.♘c3 ♘ac7 14.♘e4 ♗xd2 15.♕xd2 f5 16.♘d6 ♘e8 17.♘xe8 ♖xe8 18.a4 ♕e7 19.♖fe1 ♖a7 20.b3 ♖ea8 21.♖ab1 h6 22.f3 ♖a5 23.♘f2 ♕b4 24.♕xb4 ♘xb4, and Black converted his moderate advantage into a win. White would have got better chances by playing 16.ef ♘xf6 17.♖fe1.

10. 0-0 d6xe5

11. d4xe5 ♘b8-d7

It's interesting that Mamedyarov rejects the standard continuation 11...♗a6. Probably because in the event of 12.b3 ♗xc4?! 13.bc the knight is chased off its pedestal.

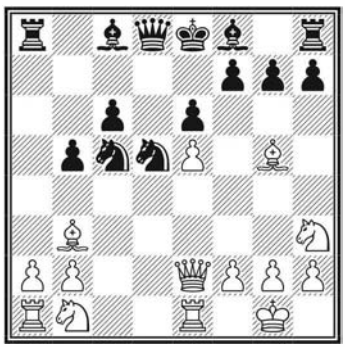
12. ♖f1-e1 b7-b5!?

13. ♗c4-b3 ...

13.♗xd5 ed? 14.♗g5 ♗e7 15.♗xe7 ♕xe7 16.e6 is out of the question, but Black could sacrifice a pawn with 13...cd, with excellent compensation.

13. ... ♘d7-c5

14. ♗c1-g5 ...



14. ... ♘d5-f4!?

A pretty-looking manoeuvre! Although the banal 14...♕c7 15.♘d2 ♗a6 is at the very least no worse.

15. ♘h3xf4 ♕d8xg5

16. ♘f4-h3 ♕g5-h4

17. ♘b1-d2 ♗f8-e7

18. ♕e2-e3 0-0

19. ♖a1-c1 ♘c5xb3

29. ♘d2xb3 ♖f8-d8
21. ♘h3-f4 ...

Potkin had a somewhat better position and had various plans available to him. The one that he chose leads to an equal ending.

21. ... ♗e7-g5
22. g2-g3 ♗g5xf4
23. ♕e3xf4 ♕h4xf4
24. g3xf4 ♖a8-a4
25. ♖c1xc6 ♖a4xf4
26. ♘b3-c5 h7-h5
27. ♖e1-c1 b5-b4
28. b2-b3 ♖f4-g4+
29. ♔g1-f1 ♗c8-d7
30. ♘c5xd7 ...

Black's bishop wasn't so strong that White needed to rush to exchange it. If 30.♖b6 ♗e8 31.♘a6 ♖d2 32.♖c4 ♖xc4 33.bc ♖xa2 34.♘xb4 ♖a5 a draw is almost inevitable, whereas now Mamedyarov has some chances in the rook ending.

30. ... ♖d8xd7
31. ♖c1-c4 ♖d7-d1+
32. ♔f1-e2 ♖g4-g1
33. ♖c4xb4 ♖g1-e1+
34. ♔e2-f3 ♖e1xe5
35. ♖c6-c2 g7-g5
36. ♖b4-e4 ♖e5-d5
37. a2-a4 g5-g4+
38. ♔f3-e2? ...

Potkin was clearly in time trouble. The king's trip to the kingside seemed innocuous enough, but 38.♔g2 ♖b1 39.b4 ♖dd1 40.♔g3 would have left Black with nothing better than to repeat moves (40... ♖d3+ 41.♔g2 ♖dd1).

38. ... ♖d1-h1
39. ♖c2-d2?! ...

39.♖f4 was preferable in order to play ♖c2-c7 and force the exchange of a rook pair after ♖d5-f5. Now, however, the f-file gives Black a strong advantage.

39. ... ♖d5-f5
40. ♔e2-d3? ...

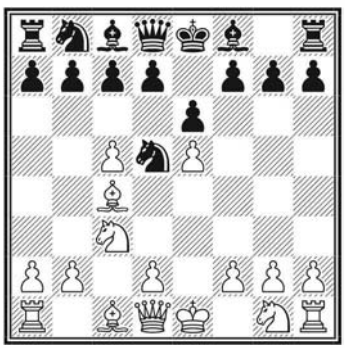
He should have looked for chances with 40.b4 ♖xh2 41.♔e1 ♖f3 42.b5. After White's latest blunder his rook is chased from the fourth rank and the passed rook's pawn heads for promotion unhindered.

40. ... ♖h1xh2
41. ♖e4-e2 h5-h4
42. b3-b4 h4-h3
43. b4-b5 ♖h2-h1
44. ♖e2-e4 ♖f5-g5
45. ♖d2-e2 h3-h2
0-1

From this we conclude that all white setups where Black can deploy his bishop to the side without hindrance, are harmless and potentially better for Black. A worrying symptom for White!

Chapter 27. 5.♗c4 e6 6.♘c3

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
4.	**c4-c5**	**♘b6-d5**
5.	**♗f1-c4**	**e7-e6**
6.	**♘b1-c3**	**...**



According to Tartakower, when White is faced with the Alekhine Defense he needs to be ready to work in the Bengal lights of the sacrificed pawns. The move orders 5.♘c3 e6 6.♗c4 and 5.♗c4 e6 6.♘c3 lead to the tabiya with the Two Pawns System where Black is offered the chance, in a number of configurations, to capture the pawn on c5 in return for allowing White a dangerous initiative.

6. ... ♘d5xc3

Interestingly, in the event of the immediate 6...♗xc5 practitioners have tended to go for 7.♕g4 and 7.d4, which are probably not the strongest moves. If 7.♕g4 0-0! 8.d4 f5 (this is also a good counter-strike to 8.♘f3) 9.♕g3 ♘b4 10.♗g5 ♗e7 11.♗xe7 ♕xe7 12.♖c1 d5 13.ed cd, it's mostly Black who is dictating terms. 7.d4 ♘xc3 8.bc was discussed in our history section (Game 6), where we concluded that chances were equal. So White should probably attempt to gain the initiative with 7.♗xd5 ed 8.♘xd5, although this is hardly ever played.

Caution! Faced with the trick move 6...♘f4, don't be tempted by the queen sortie with 7.♕g4? in view of 7...♕h4! and capturing the pawn on g2! The white queen should be less ambitious: 7.♕f3 ♘g6 8.d4 ♘c6 9.♘ge2 b6 10.cb ab 11.0-0 ♗b7 (Erwich — Westerinen, Hoogeveen 1998) 12.♕g3 ♗e7 13.♖d1. We got the impression that the black knight has somewhat overexerted himself.

Mikenas' sharp variation 6...d6 7.♘xd5 ed 8.♗xd5 c6 9.♗xf7+! ♔xf7 10.cd ♕e8 has been extensively analyzed by Vladimir Bagirov. In the theoretically significant game Vasiukov - Spassky (Tbilisi 1959) after 11.♕f3+ ♔g8 12.♕e3 ♗e6 13.♘e2 ♘d7 14. 0-0 ♘xe5! 15.♕xe5 ♗c4 16.♕xe8 ♖xe8 17.d3 ♗xd3 18.♖d1 ♗xe2 19.d7 ♖d8 20.♗g5 ♗xd1 21.♖xd1 ♗e7! 22.♗xe7 ♔f7 23.♗xd8 ♖xd8 24.f4 ♔e7 25.♔f2 ♖xd7 26.♖xd7+ ♔xd7 Black regained the piece in time and reached a drawn pawn

endgame. But if 14.d4! the reciprocal sacrifice fails to bring relief and Black's position is compromised. Therefore, 8...de 9.♕f3 f6 10.♗xb7 (Bagirov's recommendation is 10.♗b3 ♗xc5 11.♕g3, but after 11...g6 the position is better for Black) 10...♗xb7 11.♕xb7 ♘d7 12.b4 a5 13.♗a3 ♖b8 14.♕e4 ab 15.♗xb4 ♗xc5 16.♗xc5 ♘xc5 17.♕c6+ ♘d7 would be better with approximate equality.

7. d2xc3 ...

Capturing 'towards the center' is the subject of the sixth game of the historical section referred to above.

7. ... ♗f8xc5

An ingenuous move. Black usually plays 7...♘c6 so as to draw the white bishop to f4. The reason for this can be found in Game 28.

Black has at least two other reasonable continuations. The first is 7...♕h4. After 8.♕e2 ♗xc5 9.g3 ♕e7 10.♕g4 ♕f8, despite what Bagirov says, White's chances are clearly not better. Black's next moves are obvious: ♘b8-c6, b7-b6, ♗c8-b7, but what will White do? He should probably be happy with equality with an equal number of pawns after 8.♕d4 ♕xd4 9.cd b6 10.cb ab.

7...b6 was played in the game Haub - Fridman (Germany 2009). After 8.♕g4 ♗a6 9.cb ab 10.♘f3 ♗xc4 11.♕xc4 d5 12.ed cd (?!), White could have played the combination 13.♗g5 ♕d7 (13... ♗e7 14.♗xe7 ♕xe7 15.♕d4 with a double attack) 14.♘e5! b5! (14...de? 15.♖d1) 15.♘xd7 bc 16.♘b6 ♖a5 17.♗f4. However, 12...♗xd6 would prevent the tactic and maintain equality.

8. ♕d1-g4 ♔e8-f8

Statistics on games with 8...g6 have been depressing for Black, although this is not an accurate reflection of the move itself. White's initiative along the dark squares should not develop into anything much if Black plays carefully, such us with 9.h4 h5 10.♕g3 ♘c6 11.♘f3 d5 12.♗d3 ♗e7 13.0-0 b6 14.♘g5 ♖g8 (he needs to support g6) 15.♗b5 ♗d7. Or 9.♗g5 ♗e7 10.♗h6 d5 11.♗b3 ♘d7 12.♘f3 c6 13.0-0-0 (Jakubec - Freit, Slovakia 1997) – counterplay with a7-a5-a4-a3 should counterweight White's achievements on the kingside.

9. ♗c1-f4 ...

Or 9.♗g5 ♗e7 10.h4 d5 11.♗d3 h6 12.♗f4 h5 13.♕g3 b6 14.♘f3 ♗a6 15.♗c2 c5 16.0-0-0 ♘c6 17.♖he1 ♕e8 18.♘g5 (Posch – Krpelan, Austria 2004) 18...♔g8 followed by b6-b5-b4 and better prospects for Black.

9. ... d7-d5

10. 0-0-0 ♗c8-d7

Ravinsky proposed 10...♗e7 11.♘f3 ♘d7 12.♗d3 ♘c5, although developing the queen's bishop as a priority is not a mistake.

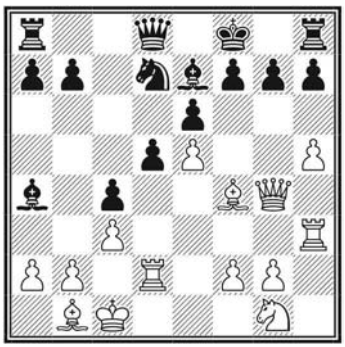
11. ♗c4-d3 ♗c5-e7

12. h2-h4 c7-c5

13. h4-h5 ♗d7-a4

14. ♖d1-d2 c5-c4

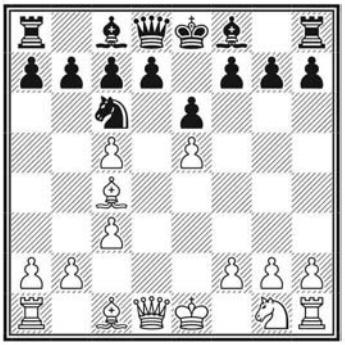
15. ♗d3-b1 ♘b8-d7
16. ♖h1-h3 ...



This position occurred in a game between Ravinsky and Fridstein (Moscow 1947). As is often the case, the defending player messed up his position by taking action on his weaker flank. After 16...f5? 17.ef ♘xf6 18.♕e2 ♔f7? (18...♗d6 was more stubborn) 19.♘f3 ♘d7 20.♗g6+! ♔f8 (20...hg 21.hg+ ♔xg6 22.♕xe6+ ♗f6 23.♖g3+ ♔h7 24.♖xd5) 21.♕xe6 hg 22.hg the fight was over. However, 16... ♕c7 17.♖e2 ♘c5 would have continued the game with equal chances.

Game 28
G.Miralles – M.Santo Roman
Montpellier 2003

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
4. c4-c5 ♘b6-d5
5. ♗f1-c4 e7-e6
6. ♘b1-c3 ♘d5xc3
7. d2xc3 ♘b8-c6



8. ♗c1-f4 ...

Caution! 8.f4? loses pawns after 8...♘xe5!. The threat of ♕d8-h4 must be constantly watched!

8. ... ♗f8xc5

8...♕h4!? deserves serious consideration. If 9.g3 ♕e7 White either has to kiss his c5 pawn goodbye or else (after g7-g5) his e5 pawn. After 10.b4 g5 11.♗e3 ♘xe5 12.♕h5 ♗g7 13.♗xg5 ♗f6 14.♗xf6 ♕xf6 (Schwarz - Solozhenkin, New York 1994) material equality was restored, but what would White do after b7-b6 and ♗c8-b7 ? Hardarson versus V.Sergeev (Olomouc 2001) gained compensation for the pawn after 10.♘f3 ♕xc5 11.♕e2 d5 12.♗d3 h6 13.h4 b6 14.0-0 ♗b7 15.b4 ♕e7 16.a4 a5 17.♗b5 thanks to his advantage in development, but this advantage is less evident after 13...♗d7 (so as to avoid giving a clue for the coming pawn storm).

9. ♕d1-g4 g7-g5!

This flank thrust against the central e5 square solves all of Black's problems.

Continuations 9...g6, 9...♗f8 and 9...♔f8 also have a good reputation, but each of them is a clear concession to White, for which there doesn't seem to have been any point in delaying capturing on c5.

10. ♗f4xg5 ...

It's too early to swap queens. White gains the exchange, but also ends up with a few bad pawns against a large number of good ones. As an illustration see the game Knudsen — Krasenkow (Helsingor 2008): 10.♕xg5 ♕xg5 11.♗xg5 ♘xe5 12.♗f6 ♗xf2+ 13.♔e2 ♘xc4 14.♗xh8 ♗xg1 15.♖hxg1 ♘xb2 16.♖af1 b6 17.♖f4 ♗a6+ 18.♔d2 0-0-0 19.♗g7 ♘c4+ 20.♔c1 ♘d6 21.♗e5 ♘f5! 22.♖a4 (22.g4 ♖g8 23.♖e1 ♘h6 24.h3 f5) 22...♔b7 23.♗xc7 ♖c8 24.♗e5 ♗c4 25.g4 ♘e7 26.♖g3 b5, and the Grandmaster converted his advantage into a win.

10. ... ♖h8-g8

11. ♗g5xd8 ...

Maybe he should have delayed the swap for another move. If 11.♘h3 h6 White has a more attractive version of the moves actually played, as after 12.♗xd8 ♖xg4 13.♗e2 ♖xg2 14.♗xc7 he has effectively won a tempo by defending f2. If 11...♗e7 12.f4 ♗xg5 13.fg ♘xe5 14.♕e4 ♘xc4 15.♕xc4 h6! 16.gh ♕f6 Black has the initiative, but after 12.♗xe7 ♖xg4 13.♗xd8 ♔xd8 14.f4 ♖xg2 15.0-0-0 ♔e7 16.♖dg1 ♖g6 17.♗e2 White has compensation for the pawn in view of ♗e2-h5. Baburin versus Tegzes (Budapest 1990) continued 13...♖xc4 14.♗xc7 ♘xe5! 15.♗xe5 ♖e4+ 16.♔d2 ♖xe5 17.♖ae1 ♖xe1 18.♖xe1 b6 19.♘g5 (19.♖e4 is interesting, in order to deploy the rook at g4) 19...♗b7 20.g3 ♔e7 21.f4 f6 22.♘e4 ♖g8 and Black won in a slightly better ending only due to his opponent's blunder.

11. ... ♖g8xg4

12. ♗c4-e2 ♖g4xg2

13. ♗d8xc7 ...



13... b7-b5!?

The rapid activation of the knight after 13...♖xf2 14.♘h3 ♖g2 (14...♖f5 15.♗g4 ♖xe5+! 16.♗xe5 ♘xe5 17.♗e2 d5 was somewhat better) 15.♘f4 ♖g8 16.♘h5 demonstrates that it's better for Black to complete his development as soon as possible. The continuation 14.♗xb5?! ♖xf2 is clearly fine for Black.

14. ♘g1-h3 ...

If 14.b4 simplifications don't

guarantee any comfort for Black: 14...♗xf2+ 15.♔f1 ♖xg1+ 16.♔xf2 ♖xa1 17.♖xa1 a6 18.♗d6 ♗b7 19.♗f3 (against ♘c6-e7) 19...0-0-0 20.♖g1. But compared with 13...b6 Black has the advantage of being able to play 14...♗b6.

14. ... ♗c8-b7

If 14...b4, then the long diagonal unexpectedly works to White's advantage: 15.♗f3 ♖g7 16.a3! ba 17.b4 ♗b6 18.♗xb6 ab 19.b5. Even so, after 19...♖a5 20.bc ♖xe5+ 21.♔d1 ♖c5 the extra piece is probably insufficient to win.

15. ♗e2-f3 ...

If 15.♗xb5 Black replies 15...♖c8 16.♗d6 ♗xd6 17.ed ♘e5 18.0-0-0 f5 with an active position to compensate for the lost pawn.

15. ... ♖g2-g8
16. ♔e1-e2 ♖a8-c8
17. ♗c7-d6 ♗c5xd6
18. e5xd6 ♘c6-a5
19. ♖h1-g1 ♗b7xf3+
20. ♔e2xf3 ♖g8-g6

Why does Santo Roman gift his opponent a tempo? It should be easy to see that after 20...♖xg1 21.♖xg1 ♔f8 22.♘g5 f6 taking the pawn would leave White a knight down.

21. ♘h3-f4 ♖g6xg1
22. ♖a1xg1 ♔e8-f8
23. ♖g1-g5 a7-a6
24. a2-a4 f7-f5
25. a4xb5 a6xb5
26. ♘f4-h5 ♖c8-c6
27. ♖g5-g7 ♖c6xd6
28. ♖g7xh7 ♘a5-c4

½ - ½

The main line of the Two Pawns System makes a convincing case that from the theoretical point of view this weapon is obsolete. From the practical point of view it can, of course, be played. But it is interesting the note that the modest b7-b6 successfully counters the pawn attack in many different modifications.

Part 6. Various lines after 3.d4

Chapter 28. Rare replies to 3.d4

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 ...



This is the main continuation in the Alekhine Defense and the starting point of a number of fundamental systems. In this position, undermining White's pawn center with 3...d6 is a virtually automatic move – except for cases where Black wants to confuse his opponent and try other moves. Deviations from the main systems after 3.d4 d6 are considered in Chapters 29-31.

3. ... e7-e6

Caution! Given the mobility of White's pawns each experiment will be different. We should reject the move 3...♘c6? straight away. In the widely-known 11-move miniature Borokhov – Fine (Pasadena 1932) the game continued 4.c4 ♘b6 5.d5 ♘xe5 6.c5 ♘bc4?! (6...♘xd5 is the best way to lose the piece) 7.f4?! (7.♕d4!) 7...e6 8.♕d4 ♕h4+ 9.g3 ♕h6? (9...♕e7 10.fe ed 11.♘f3 ♕xc5 is more stubborn, winning a third pawn for the knight) 10.♘c3 ed 11.fe. If 4...♘db4 5.a3 ♘a6 6.b4 ♘ab8 7.b5 ♘a5 8.♗d2 c6 9.♘f3 pieces are equal but Black's position is hopelessly compromised.

And don't count on the absurd O'Sullivan Gambit with 3...b5?! 4.♗xb5 c5 naively expecting 5.dc?? ♕a5+. After 5.c3 e6 6.♘f3 cd 7.♕xd4 ♗b7 8.0-0 ♕c7 9.♘bd2 ♘c6 10.♗xc6 ♕xc6 11.♘b3 ♗a6 12.♖e1 ♗e7 13.♕g4 (Visser – Tilstra, Groningen 1989) the black king will be feeling sick, so the sacrifice is pointless.

The continuation 3...g6?! is identical to the opening 1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.e5 with the shelter 3...♘d5

instead of the 'classical' 3...♘h5. Sutovsky versus Z.Varga (Budapest 1999) continued 4.c4 (4.♘f3 will probably lead to usual positions) 4...♘b6 5.c5! ♘d5 6.♗c4 c6 7.♘f3 (7.♕f3!?) b6 8.♘c3 ♘xc3 9.bc ♗a6 10.♗b3! bc 11.♘g5! c4 12.♕f3! f6 13.ef ef 14.0-0! ♗e7 (he cannot take any of the pieces) 15.♗c2 f5 16.♖e1 0-0, and here the most convincing move is 17.♕g3 followed by ♗c1-f4.

In reply to 3...c5 it is best for White to first chase the knight from the center and then take the pawn: 4.c4 ♘c7 5.dc (Keres' recommendation 5.d5 d6 6.e6!? fe 7.♗d3 doesn't threaten Black due to 7...g6 8.h4 ed 9.cd ♕d7 10.h5 ♖g8) 5...♘c6 6.♘f3 ♘e6 7.♘c3 ♘xc5 8.♗e3 b6 9.♕d2 or 4...♘b4 5.dc ♕a5 6.♗d2 ♕xc5 7.♗c3 ♘4c6 8.♘f3 – winning back the material has made a mess of Black's pieces. Moreover, if 4...♘b4 then 5.d5 d6 6.a3 ♕a5 7.♗d2 ♗f5 8.♗c3 is also good.

The aim of the somewhat timid continuation 3...c6 is to free up the c7 square for the knight, which is a better square for it than b6. This has been played several times by a master called Alexander Panchenko, the namesake of the Grandmaster. Against Kislinsky (Kiev 2010) his position didn't turn out well: 4.c4 ♘c7 5.♘c3 (5.♘f3 d6 leads to the variation 3...d6 4.♘f3 c6 5.c4 ♘c7 via a different move order) 5... d6 6.f4 de 7.fe ♗f5 8.♗d3 ♗xd3 9.♕xd3 e6 10.♘ge2 ♗e7 11.0-0 0-0 12.♕g3 f5 13.ef ♖xf6 14.♗f4 ♘ba6?! 15.♗e5 ♖g6 16.♕f3 ♗f6 17.♘e4 ♗xe5 18.♕f7+ ♔h8 19.de with a victory close at hand. 6... ♗f5 is presumably better, avoiding opening the f-file.

The retreat 3...♘b6 is seen in Game 29.

4. ♘g1-f3 ...

Caution! The following trap at this very early stage of the game is not widely-known, as it is always hidden back-stage! After 4.c4 ♗b4+? White blocked the check in thirty-odd games, whereas 5.♔e2! is close to winning! In the variation 5...♘b6 6.c5 ♘d5 7.a3 ♗a5 8.b4 White gains a piece for two pawns and now only needs to consolidate. This is hard evidence of the danger of playing automatically!

Black needs to move his knight back to b6 straight away. In this case 5.♘c3 d6 6.f4 is interesting, transposing to the Four Pawns Attack with the move e7-e6 being out of place. Luther against Kitchlew (Santo Domingo 2003) after 6...♘c6 7.♘f3 de 8.fe ♘e7 9.♗e2 ♘f5 10.0-0 ♗e7 11.♘e4 h6 12.♕d3 ♘d7?! (12...h5 would have prevented White's next move) 13.g4! ♘h4 14.♘xh4 ♗xh4 15.♕h3 ♘f8 16.♕f3 ♕e7 17.b3 ♘h7 18.♗a3! ♕d7 19.♖ad1 ♘g5 20.♘xg5 ♗xg5 21.♗d3 created the killer threat 22.♗g6!

4. ... ♗f8-e7

Compared to 4.c4 ♗b4+? the statistics of the continuation 4...

♘c6 5.c4 ♗b4+? (according to Chess Assistant 14) provides more comfort: of eleven players one came up with 6.♔e2! Given that the bishop gets trapped in any case 5... ♘b6 should be seen as the lesser evil. In any event, 6.♘c3 d6 7.ed cd 8.d5!? ♘e5 9.de ♗xe6 10.c5 ♘xf3+ 11.♕xf3 dc (Balashov - Turikov, Opatija 2011) 12.♗b5+! ♗d7 13.0-0 ♗e7 14.♖d1 or 12...♘d7 13.♕xb7 ♗e7 14.♗f4 0-0 15.♖d1 are better for White.

The position after 4...c5 more often arises as a Sicilian: 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.e5 ♘d5 4.d4 e6?! (instead of the usual 4...cd). Khalifman's variation with 5.c4 ♘b6 6.♗g5! ♗e7 7.♗xe7 ♕xe7 8.a4 d5 9.ed ♕xd6 10.b4! (winning a pawn) is the best way to highlight Black's problems.

5. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6

6. ♘b1-c3 d7-d6

If 6...d5 then it's possible to transpose to the main line via exchanging, or else to block the position with 7.c5. After 7... ♘6d7 8.♗d3 (Alekhine – Martin, Madrid 1941, simultaneous game) Black can easily equalize by attacking the pawn with 8...b6, whereas if 8.♕a4 c6 9.b4 b6 10.cb ♘xb6 12.♕a5 Black has not yet achieved equality.

7. e5xd6 ...

If 7.♗d3 0-0? 8.h4 g6?! 9.♗h6 ♖e8 (Zivkovic – Grujic, Teslic 2006) 10.h5 White has an irresistible attack. The correct continuation is 7...de 8.♘xe5 ♗f6, undermining the centralized knight with the help of c7-c5 or ♘b6-d7. In answer to 7.♗e2 castling is no longer dangerous, but then he should again exchange on e5 and hassle the menacing knight. White doesn't have much of an advantage.

7. ... c7xd6

8. ♗f1-d3 ...

The bishop's sorties to d3 and e2 are here approximately equal in impact. If 8.♗e2 White gradually strengthens his position without troubling the black king. For example, 8...♘8d7 9.0-0 ♘f6 10.h3 0-0 11.♗e3 ♗d7 12.♖c1 ♖c8 13.b3 ♘a8 14.♕d2 b6 15.a4 a5 16.♖fd1 d5 17.♘e5, and Black has no counterplay (Butkiewicz – Krasenkow, Wroclaw 2012).

8. ... ♘b8-c6



The game Ziyatdinov – Lipecki (Bern 1995) continued 9.♗e3 d5 (a strategically controversial advance, but he needed to counter d4-d5 somehow) 10.c5 ♘d7 11.0-0 0-0

12.♕b1 h6 13.b4 ♗f6 14.♖e1 a6 15.♕b3 b6 16.♖ad1 ♖b8 17.♗b1 bc 18.♕c2 g6 19.bc ♔g7 20.♗f4, and 20...♖b4? is refuted via 21.♖xe6! In the event of any other sensible move the sacrifice is met with the intermediate move ♘c6-b4.

9.0-0 0-0 10.♖e1 ♘d7 11.d5 ed 12.♘xd5 ♘de5 is also better for White (Macura – Silveira, Brazil 2009). And now 13.♗f4 with the unhappy choice for Black between 13...♗g4 14.♘xe5! ♗xd1 15.♘xc6 bc 16.♘xe7+ ♔h8 17.♖axd1 (with three pieces for the queen) and 13...♗f6 14.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 15.♗xe5 de 16.♕c2 h6 17.♕c3 ♖e8 18.♗e4 (threatening the pawn on e5).

Game 29

M.Pavlov – S.Zhigalko

Alushta 2010

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**♘d5-b6**



Black retreats his knight in anticipation of enemy attacks. But this square isn't that appropriate for the knight.

4. a2-a4 ...

So he still wants to harass the knight, or leave it without its best defender. The pawn advance 4.f4 restricts the queen's bishop, while for Black standard positions with closed pawn chains are acceptable. For example, 4...d5 5.♘f3 ♗g4 6.h3 ♗xf3 7.♕xf3 e6 8.♗e3 g6 9.♘d2 ♘c6 10.c3 h5 11.g4 a6 12.a4 ♕d7 13.a5 ♘c8 14.♗d3 ♘8e7 15.g4 0-0-0 16.♘b3 ♔b8 17.♘c5 ♕e8 18.b4 ♘a7 (S.Novikov – Pesotsky, Plovdiv 2008) – Black has given up space but controls the breakthrough squares. Or 4... d6 5.♘f3 ♗g4 6.h3 ♗xf3 7.♕xf3 c6 and d6-d5, getting to a similar-looking struggle.

Finnish Grandmaster Westerinen met 4.f4 several times with the reply 4...d5, while against 4.♘f3 he employed the same move frequently and with success. For example, 5.♗e2 ♗g4 6.0-0 e6 7.♘bd2 c5 8.c3 ♘c6 9.♖e1 ♖c8 10.dc ♗xc5 11.♘b3 ♗e7 (11...♗xf3 12.♘xc5 ♗xe2 13.♕xe2 ♕e7 14.♗e3 ♘c4 is no worse) 12.♘fd4 ♗xe2 13.♕xe2 ♘c4 14.♗f4 0-0 15.♖ad1 ♗g5 (15...♕b6!?) 16.♗g3 g6 17.f4 ♗h4 18.♖d3 a5 19.a4 ♗xg3 20.♖xg3 ♕b6 with counterplay (Sorri – Westerinen, Lappeenranta 1996). Or 5.♗d3 ♗g4 6.h3 ♗xf3 7.♕xf3 e6 8.0-0 c5 9.dc ♘6d7 10.♕g3

♘c6 11.f4 g6 12.♗e3 ♘xc5 (12...♗xc5 13.♗xc5 ♘xc5 looks like a more accurate way of exchanging) 13.♗xc5 ♗xc5+ 14.♔h1 ♕b6 15.♘c3 ♘b4 16.♗b5+ ♔f8 17.♗a4 ♖c8 18.♗b3 ♗e7 19.♘e2 ♖c7 20.♖ac1 h5 21.♕f3 h4 22.♘c3 ♔g7 (Simonsen – Westerinen, Torshavn 1997). Black makes a good fist of resisting his opponent on both sides of the board.

4. ... a7-a5

He needs to stop the pawn. If 4...d5 5.a5 ♘6d7 6.b4 g6 7.h4 e6 8.c3 h5 9.♗g5 ♗e7 10.♘h3 ♘f8 11.♗d3 a6 12.♘d2 ♗d7 13.♕e2 ♘c6 14.♘f3 Black is clearly cramped (Balogh – Z.Varga, Eforie Nord 2008). Pinning the e-pawn with 6.♗g5 is also worth considering. Undoing the pin via 6...h6 7.♗h4 g5 8.♗g3 e6 provokes the 9.h4 thrust!

5. ♘g1-f3 ...

Khalifman highlights the undoubted advantages of the continuation 5.♗b5!? If 5...e6, then 6.♕g4 prevents Black from developing the dark-squared bishop. He can swap pawns in reply to 5...c6 6.♗d3 d6, or else after 7.♘f3 switch to the variation 3...d6 4.♘f3 ♘b6 5.a4 a5 6.♗b5 c6 7.♗d3, which is good for White.

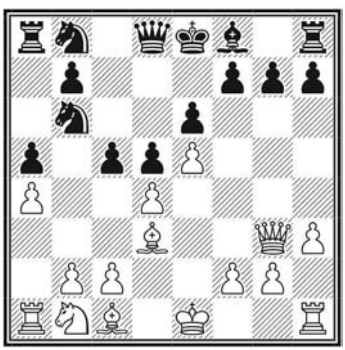
5. ... d7-d5

Heikki Westerinen has played this line as well. After 6.ed ed 7.♗d3 ♗g4 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♘bd2 ♗h5 10.♘e4 ♗g6 11.♖e1 0-0 12.♘eg5 (12.♘g3!?) 12...♗xg5 13.♘xg5 ♕f6 14.c3 ♗xd3 15.♕xd3 ♕g6 16.♕xg6 hg 17.b3 ♘c6 18.♗d2 ♖fe8 he gradually gained equal chances against de la Villa (Benasque 1998). Taking on 6...cd?! leads to difficulties for Black with mobilizing his pieces: 7.d5! ♘a6 8.♗e3 ♗d7 9.♘g5 ♘b4 10.♘c3 g6 11.♕f3 f6 12.♘e6 ♗xe6 13.de ♗g7 14.♗b5+ ♔f8 15.0-0 ♘xc2 (Kovalev – Leko, Tilburg 1992) 16.♗xb6 ♕xb6 17.♘d5 ♕d8 18.♖ac1 ♘b4 19.♘xb4 ab 20.♕xb7 with a won position.

6. ♗f1-d3 ♗c8-g4
7. h2-h3 ♗g4xf3
8. ♕d1xf3 e7-e6

These strategically sensible decisions are not sufficient to fix the defects on the queenside. Here, 9.0-0 c5 10.dc ♘6d7 11.♕g3 ♘xc5 12.♘c3 would be good for White, invading on b5. However, White normally doesn't spend time castling.

9. ♕f3-g3 c7-c5



10. ♗d3-b5+ ...

Pavlov moves away from the idea of installing his knight on b5: 10.dc

♘6d7 11.♘c3 ♘c6 12.♘b5 ♘dxe5 13.♗f4 f6 (Benjamin – Alburt, New York 1990) 14.♗xe5 ♘xe5 15.f4 ♘xd3+ 16.cd ♖c8 17.♖c1, holding on to the pawn. Or 11... ♘xc5 12.♘b5 ♘xd3+ 13.cd ♗b4+ 14.♔f1 ♔f8 15.h4 ♘c6 16.h5 h6 17.♖h4 (Stefansson – Westerinen, Reykjavik 1997) – and the rook successfully joins the attack.

10. ... **♘b8-c6**
11. d4xc5 **♘b6-d7**
12. ♗c1-f4 **...**

White had obviously foreseen the knight moving to f5, but he didn't plan to chase it away from there. The variation with 12.♗e3 g6 13.c4 ♗xc5 14.cd ed 15.♗xc5 ♘xc5 16.0-0 is preferable – White is a little better here.

12. ... **♘c6-d4**
13. ♘b1-a3 **♘d4-f5**
14. ♕g3-d3 **♗f8xc5**
15. g2-g4?! **...**

Consistent. But Pavlov will soon regret that pawns cannot move backwards. After the swap on d7 he really should have placed his knight firmly on b5

15. ... **♘f5-e7**
16. ♗f4-e3 **♘e7-c6**
17. f2-f4?! **...**

Here 17.♗xc5 ♘xc5 18.♕e3 d4 19.♕e2 ♕d5 would have been preferable, followed by castling on either side.

17. ... **♕d8-h4+**
18. ♔e1-e2 **0-0**
19. ♖a1-f1 **f7-f6!**
20. e5xf6 **♕h4xf6**
21. c2-c3 **♗c5xa3**
22. b2xa3 **♕f6-e7**
23. ♔e2-f2 **...**

He has gained absolutely nothing from advancing his pawns. The king is unsafe and sticks out like a sore thumb, together with numerous other weaknesses. White decides to spirit his king to safety, sacrificing material.

23. ... **♕e7xa3**
24. ♔f2-g2 **♘d7-c5**
25. ♕d3-c2 **♘c5-e4**
26. ♗b5-d3 **♕a3xc3**
27. ♗d3xe4 **♕c3xe3**
28. ♗e4xh7+ **♔g8-h8**
29. ♖f1-f3? **...**

An oversight in a hopeless position (29.♕g6 ♖xf4 30.♕h5 ♖xf1 31.♖xf1 ♕h6 32.♕xh6 gh 33.♖f7 ♖b8).

29. ... **♕e3xf3+!**
0-1

Deviations from 3...d6 are always to a greater or lesser extent better for White. Even the best of these: 3... c6, 3...e6 and 3...♘b6, don't offer Black prospects of an active game even if they are reasonably safe.

Chapter 29. 3.d4 d6 4.ed

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6



4. e5xd6 ...

Let's also consider continuations that are not part of the Exchange System: the move 4.f4 is the subject of Chapter 30, while the development of the bishop on c4 is treated in Chapter 31. 4.♗e2 usually leads to other lines; for example, 4...de 5.de ♘c6 6.♘f3 is analyzed via the move order 4.♘f3 ♘c6 5.♗e2 de 6.de. The game Jones – Baburin (Cork 2005) deserves separate mention: 4...g6 (and this is correct, as in the event of 4.♘f3 g6 the bishop's place is on c4, and not on e2) 5.f4 ♗h6! 6.♗f3 de 7.de ♗xf4 8.♗xd5 ♗xc1 9.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 10.♕xc1 ♔g7 11.♕e3 ♘c6 12.♘f3 ♗g4 13.♘bd2 ♕d5 14.c4 ♕e6 15.0-0 ♖hf8 16.b3 ♖ad8 17.h3 ♗xf3 18.♘xf3 h6 19.♖ad1 a5, and Black maintains equality.

4. ... c7xd6

4...♕xd6 is tempting, in order to have two more pieces developed than White. But under enemy fire both of them will be chased back. The position after 5.c4 ♘f6 usually occurs after a Scandinavian move order – 1.e4 d5 2.ed ♕xd5 3.d4 ♘f6 4.c4 ♕d6 (instead of the more attractive 4...♕e4+). As homage to the Alekhine Defense we change the move order with the example Kuijpers – Epishin (Utrecht 2007): 6.♘c3 c6 7.♗e3 g6 8.♘f3 ♗g7 9.♗e2 0-0 10.h3 ♖d8 (10... ♗f5!?) 11.0-0 ♕c7 12.♕c1 ♗f5 13.♗f4 ♕c8 14.♕e3 ♖e8 15.♖ac1 h5 16.♘e5 (16.♖fd1 and d4-d5 is even more accurate) with a space advantage.

In reply to 4...ed 5.c4, apart from retreating to b6 and switching to the exchange variation, the move 5... ♘f6 has also been seen. After we add the natural moves 6.♘c3 ♗e7 7.♘f3 we transpose to a line of the Petroff Defense that is good for White (1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘xe4 5.c4 ♗e7 6.♘c3 ♘f6 7.d4).

If White waits with c2-c4, then new squares are available for the knight. For example, 5.♘f3 ♗e7 6.♗e2 0-0 7.0-0 ♗f6 8.c4 ♘e7

9.♘c3 ♖e8 10.♗d3 ♗f5 11.♗xf5 ♘xf5 12.♕d3 g6 with a comfortable game. If 7...♗f5 8.c4 the knight heads for b4, so a prophylactic move is useful: 8.a3 ♗f6 9.c4 ♘e7 10.♘c3 ♘bc6 11.d5 ♘e5 12.♘d4 h6 13.♗e3 ♗h7 14.♕d2 ♘f5 15.♘xf5 ♘xf5 16.h3 ♖e8 (Gross – Biolek, Czech Republic 1998). That said, there is no evident advantage here.

5. ♘g1-f3 ...

White preferred 5.♗c4 in the game Carno – Degraeve, Saint Affrique 2013. He then voluntarily conceded the bishop pair and a pawn advantage in the center to his opponent: 5...♘b6 6.♗b5+ ♘c6 7.d5 a6 8.♗xc6+?! bc 9.dc ♕c7 10.♕f3 d5 11.♗e3 ♕xc6 12.♘c3 ♗b7 13.♗d4 ♘c4 14.b3 ♘d6 15.♘ge2 e6 16.0-0 ♘f5. With the retreat 6.♗b3 the bishop doesn't have a bright future either: 6... d5 7.♗f4 ♘c6 8.♘f3 ♗g4 9.c3 e6 10.♘bd2 ♗d6 11.♗xd6 ♕xd6 12.0-0 ♖c8 13.♕e2 0-0 14.♕e3 ♗h5 15.♖fe1 ♘d7 16.♘f1 b5 17.♖ac1 b4 18.♘g3 ♗xf3 19.♕xf3 bc 20.bc g6 (Adamovicz – V.Sergeev, Wroclaw 2008) – the Karlsbad storm creates inoperable weakness on c3 for White.

We can continue the 5.c4 ♘f6 line as follows: 6.♘c3 g6 7.♘f3 ♗g7 8.♗e2 0-0 9.0-0 – this position may be reached by many other openings. Mostly from the variation 1. d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.e3 g6 4.♘c3 ♗g7 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♗e2 d6 7.0-0 cd 8.ed (so we arrive here one move earlier) with an approximate continuation such as 8...♗g4 9.h3 ♗xf3 10.♗xf3 ♘c6 11.♗e3 ♖c8 12.b3 a6 13.♖c1 ♖e8 14.♕e2 e5 15.de de 16.♗xc6 ♖xc6 17.♖fd1 ♖d6 18.♗g5 (Abramovic – Dudukovic, Pozarevac 2012). Black's worse position was ruined by the tactical oversight 18...h6?? 19.♘e4! (19...♖xd1+ 20.♖xd1 ♕e7 21.♗xf6 ♗xf6 22.♖d7!).

5. ... g7-g6

Black needs to keep in mind which defense after 4.♘f3 will allow him not to worry about the exchange. The fianchetto is beyond doubt one of them. At the same time, there is not much logic in the pin 5...♗g4, as White has already stopped fighting over the e5 square.

6. ♗f1-c4 ...

The continuation 6.c3 ♗g7 7.♗d3 is toothless, as it allows Black to activate in the center and fight for a small advantage with the help of 7...0-0 8.0-0 ♘c6 9.♖e1 e5. The bishop's development to c4 is more justified here, as after 6... ♘b6 7.♗b3 the plan with d6-d5 and e7-e6 is out of tune with g7-g6. Note the retreat to b6 should be considered within the line 4.♘f3 g6 5.♗c4 ♘b6 6.♗b3 ♗g7.

6. ... ♘d5-f6
7. 0-0 ♗f8-g7
8. ♖f1-e1 ...

White should play very accurately if Black attempts to loosen his hold on the center. This can be seen from the continuation 8.♗f4 0-0

9.♘bd2 ♘c6 10.c3 ♘h5 11.♗e3 e5?! 12.de de?! 13.♗c5 ♖e8 14.♘e4 ♗e6?! 15.♗xe6 ♖xe6 16.♘fg5 ♕xd1 17.♖fxd1 ♖ee8 18.♘d6 ♖e7 19.♘b5 – Todorovic won the exchange and the game against Nestorovic (Belgrade 1995). If Black hates playing a waiting game, then it's OK for him to play on the queenside: 10...♗d7 11.a3 ♖c8 12.♗a2 b5 13.♖e1 ♖e8 14.h3 ♘a5 15.♗h2 ♘c4 16.♘xc4 bc 17.♘d2 (Dmitriev – Chukhno, Voronezh 2004). Instead of 17...♗e6?! 18.♖xe6! fe 19.♗xc4 where White has the initiative, 17...d5 is safe enough.

8. ... 0-0

9. c2-c3 ...

Picula versus Solak (Herzeg Novi 2001) preferred to play prophylactically: 9.h3 ♗f5 10.c3 ♘c6 11.♗f4 ♕b6 12.♗b3. Now, 12...♗xb1 13.♖xb1 d5 14.♘e5 e6 is strategically sound and guarantees Black a solid position.

9. ... d6-d5

10. ♗c4-d3 ...

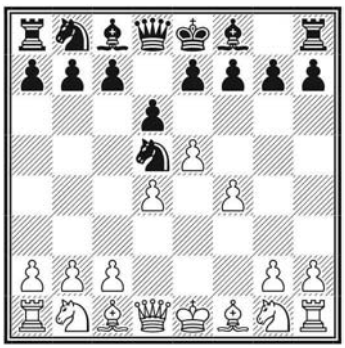


We have now reached a position that is also a variation of the Caro-Kann Defense via a different move order, even though the Caro-Kann and Alekhine Defense are normally totally different: 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.ed cd 4.♗d3 ♘f6 5.c3 g6 6.♘f3 ♗g7 7.0-0 0-0 8.♖e1. White has neither better placed pieces, nor sensible plans. For example, 8...♘c6 9.h3 ♗f5 10.♗f4 ♗xd3 11.♕xd3 ♕b6 12.♘a3 ♖fc8 13.♘c2 e6 14.♖ab1 a5 15.♘e5 ♘xe5 16.♗xe5 ♕c6 17.♘a3 ♘e4 18.♗xg7 ♔xg7 19.♖e2 ♖ab8 20.♘b5 ♕c4 21.♕xc4 ♖xc4 (Royset – Burmakin, Tromso 2010) or 9.♗f4 ♘h5 10.♗g5 ♕d6 11.♗h4 e5!? 12.de ♘xe5 13.♘xe5 ♗xe5 14.h3 ♘f4 15.♗f1 ♘e6 16.♗d3 ♘c5 17.♗c2 ♗e6 18.♘d2 ♗g7 19.♘f3 ♕b6 20.♖b1 ♖fe8 21.♘d4 ♗d7 (Piscopo – Burmakin, Bratto 2010) with equality in both cases.

Capturing on d6 on the 4th move is not great for White. Black has a choice of how to recapture on d6 and also between ♘d5-b6 and ♘d7-f6 – while White gets nothing in return!

Chapter 30. 3.d4 d6 4.f4

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. f2-f4 ...



White strengthens the pawn on e5, leaving for later the choice of whether to play c2-c4 or c2-c3.

4. ... d6xe5

If 4...g6 it makes sense to switch to the Four Pawns Attack. After 5.♘f3 ♗g7 6.♗c4 ♘b6 7.♗b3 0-0 8.0-0 ♘c6 9.c3 de 10.fe ♘a5 11.♗c2 c5 (the alternative way to undermine the center 11...f6!? 12.b4 ♘c6 13.a4 fe 14.a5 ♘d5 15.b5 ed 16.bc dc complicates the game) 12.dc ♕xd1 13.♖xd1 ♘bc4 14.♖e1 ♘c6 15.♗e4 ♘4xe5 16.♘xe5 ♘xe5 17.♗f4 ♘c6 (Kr.Georgiev - Yanev, Bulgaria 2001) Black is on the way to equality, all the more so as the continuation 18.♗xc6 bc 19.♖xe7 ♖d8 20.♘d2 ♗f8 21.♖c7 ♗xc5+ 21.♔h1 ♖e8 threatens an unpleasant invasion on e2.

On the other hand, if 4...♗f5 then playing the Four Pawns is impossible due to 5...♘b4. Further, Black successfully manages without exchanging in the center (and transposing to 4...de), for example 5.♘f3 e6 6.♗d3 ♗xd3 7.♕xd3 c5 8.0-0 ♘c6 9.f5 cd 10.fe fe 11.♘g5 ♕d7 (11...♘xe5 12.♕h3 ♘c7 13.♘xe6 ♘xe6 14.♕xe6+ ♗e7 15.♘a3 with the initiative for a pawn) 12.♕h3 (Kr.Georgiev – Petkov, Bankya 1992), and here he should continue 12...de 13.♘xe6 ♖g8 followed by ♗f8-e7. The white knight prevents Black from castling but Black's king is relatively safe and he has an extra pawn!

5. f4xe5 ...

The total disarray in White's camp after 5.de?! ♗f5 6.c4?! ♘b4 7.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 8.♘a3 e6 was seen many years ago in the game Morrison - Colle (Scarborough 1926). If White plays the better 6.♗d3 ♗xd3 7.♕xd3 e6 8.♘f3 ♘c6 9.♗d2, then at least his queenside remains intact.

5. ... ♗c8-f5

Black sometimes plays 5...♘c6 here, in order to pin the knight after 6.♘f3. For example, 6...♗g4 7.♗e2 e6 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.c3 0-0 10.♘e1 ♗xe2 11.♕xe2 ♕d7 12.♘d2 f6

13.ef ♘xf6 14.♘d3 ♖ae8 15.♘c4 (15.♘f3!?) 15...b5 16.♘ce5 ♘xe5 17.♘xe5 ♕d5, and the powerful knight forces Black to struggle for equality (Zapata – Kovacevic, Zenica 1986). It may have been better to exchange bishops with 11...♗g5.

In Game 30 we see the move 5... c5.

6. ♘g1-f3 ...

Caution! After 6.♗d3? ♗xd3 7.♕xd3 ♘b4! Black wins a pawn no matter where the queen retreats.

6. ... e7-e6

It's too early to play 6...c5?!, as the king's bishop energetically joins the game: 7.♗b5+ ♘c6 8.c4 ♘db4 9.d5! (9.0-0 cd 10.♘xd4 ♗d3! 11.♘xc6 bc 12.♕f3 cb 13.♕xf7+ ♔d7 14.♖d1 ♕b6+ 15.♔h1 ♔c7 leads to a complicated game) 9... a6 10.♗a4 ♘d3+ 11.♔f1 b5 12.cb ♘cxe5 13.b6+ ♗d7 14.♘xe5 ♘xe5 15.♗f4 with a dangerous initiative.

7. ♗f1-d3 ♗f5xd3

Pinning the knight when White has a strong pawn center is harmless, even more so when it involves a loss of tempo. For example, 7...♗g4 8.0-0 ♘c6 9.c3 ♗e7 10.♕e1 ♗xf3 11.♖xf3 ♗g5?! 12.♗xg5 ♕xg5 13.♘d2 ♘f4 14.♗f1 ♘g6 15.♘e4 ♕h4 16.♕e3 0-0 17.♗d3 ♘ce7 18.♖af1 with a clear advantage and no counterplay at all for Black (Pelikian – Paglilla, Argentina 2002).

8. ♕d1xd3 c7-c5

9. 0-0 ♗f8-e7

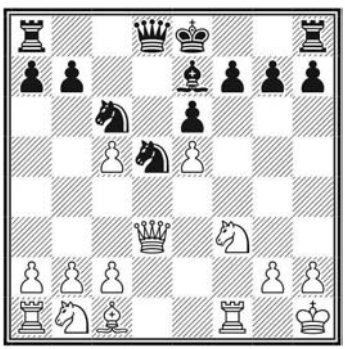
10. d4xc5 ...

He needs to break the chain before his opponent carries out exchanges in the center creating a weakness on d4. After 10.c3 ♘c6 11.♘bd2 cd 12.cd h6 13.♘b3 a5 14.♗d2 ♕b6 15.♖ac1 ♖d8 Black grabs the initiative on the queenside (Maltsev – De Verdier, Prague 2013).

10. ... ♘b8-c6

Another good move is 10... ♘d7 11.♕e4 ♕c7 12.c4 ♗xc5+ 13.♔h1 ♘e7 14.♘c3 0-0 15.♗f4 a6 16.♖ad1 ♖ac8 17.♕e2 ♗b4 (Glek – Appel, Germany 2010) 18.♘e4 ♕xc4 19.♕xc4 ♖xc4 20.♖xd7 ♖xe4 21.♗g3 with an approximately even ending.

11. ♔g1-h1 ...



11. ... ♗e7xc5

It's hard to say whether the pawn on e5 will become the basis for an attack on the kingside given White's spatial advantage, or, on the other hand, whether it will become a

target for the enemy pieces. A tough struggle typical of this variation ensued in the game Kupreichik – Puranen (Jyvaskyla 1991), some of whose moves appeared somewhat irrational: 11...♕a5 12.c4 ♘db4 13.♕e4 (13.♕e2!?) 13...♖d8 14.a3 ♘d3 15.b4 ♘cxb4 16.♗d2, and instead of the headstrong 16...♕a6? 17.ab ♕xa1 18.♕xb7 ♕a4 19.c6 the continuation 16...♗xc5 17.♘e1 ♘xe1 18.♕xe1 ♖xd2 19.♕xd2 ♘c6 20.♕xa5 ♘xa5 would most likely end in a draw.

12. ♕d3-e4 ♕d8-c7
13. a2-a3 ♗c5-e7
14. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
15. ♘b1-c3 a7-a6
16. b2-b4 ...

Further, the game Heberla - Grabarczyk (Opole 2007) continued 16...♖d8? 17.♕g4 g6 18.♗h6 ♖d3 19.♘e4 ♘xc4 20.♘f6+ ♗xf6 21.♕xc4 ♖xf3 22.♖xf3 ♗xe5 23.♖af1 – Black has gained a second pawn for the exchange, but his position is clearly poor. Correct was 16...0-0 17.c5 ♘d7, tying up his opponent with the defense of e5.

Game 30
V.Kupreichik – Z.Varga
Debrecen 1992

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. f2-f4 d6xe5
5. f4xe5 c7-c5!?



The attack on the base of the pawn chain is more powerful here because the knight has remained in the center. Now the move 6.c4?! comes too late in view of 6...♘b4 with a continuation such as 7.d5 ♗f5 8.♘a3 e6 9.♘f3 ed 10.♗g5 ♕a5 11.cd ♘d3++ (11...♘c2++ wins the exchange but keeps White's pawn center intact) 12.♔e2 c4!? 13.♘xc4 ♕xd5 14.♕b3 ♕e4+ 15.♔d2 ♘c5 16.♕e3 ♘bd7. After the swapping of queens Black retains the initiative (Hahlbohm - Rabiega, Berlin 2009).

6. ♘g1-f3 ...

In the game Skrjabin – Maki Uuro (Finland 2003) White attempted to retain his pawn on d4: 6.c3 ♘c6 7.♘f3 ♗g4 8.♗b5 e6 9.0-0 ♕b6 10.♕a4 ♗xf3 11.♖xf3 ♗e7 12.♘d2 0-0 13.♘c4 ♕c7 14.♘e3 (it is preferable to exchange queens via 14.♗xc6 bc 15.♕a5 ♕xa5 16.♘xa5) 14... ♘b6 15.♕c2 cd 16.cd ♖ac8 17.♕e4 ♖cd8. The result didn't provide much comfort – the pawn's life is

hanging on a thread and White has no counterplay.

6. ... c5xd4

By providing clarity on what is going on in the center Black has slightly helped his opponent. It was worth considering 6...♗g4 7.♗b5+ ♘c6 8.0-0 e6 9.♗xc6+ bc 10.♘c3 ♘xc3 11.bc ♕a5 with an excellent position.

7. ♕d1xd4 ♘b8-c6

7...♗f5!? prevents the queen from heading to e4, with the likely continuation 8.♘c3 e6 8.♗b5+ ♘c6, which is analyzed in the following note.

8. ♕d4-e4 ...

Kupreichik deviates from his earlier game with Kengis (Podolsk 1990): 8.♗b5 ♕a5+ 9.♘c3 ♘xc3 10.♗xc6+ bc 11.♗d2 ♘b5 12.♗xa5 ♘xd4 13.♘xd4 e6 14.0-0-0 ♗d7 15.♖d3 c5 16.♖hd1!?, and accepting the knight sacrifice probably leads to a draw – 16...cd 17.♖xd4 ♗c6 18.♖d8+ ♖xd8 19.♖xd8+ ♔e7 20.♖c8 ♗e8 21.♖c7+ ♗d7 22.♖xa7 (having in mind a move repetition with 23.♗b4+ ♔d8 24.♗a5+ ♔c8 25.♖c7+ ♔d8 26.♖a7+). White can choose not to force events (16.♘f3!?), but Black can vary play here – 11...♗f5 12.♗c3 ♕d5 13.♕xd5 cd 14.♘d4 ♗d7. Moreover, another good continuation is 8...♗f5 9.♘c3 e6 10.♗g5 ♗e7 11.♗xe7 ♘xe7 12.0-0-0 0-0 13.♕xd8 ♖fxd8 14.h3 a6 15.♗xc6 ♘xc6 with simplifications along the d-file and a draw in the offing, Ankerst – Cs.Horvath, Budapest 1992.

8. ... g7-g6

The hidden aim of the alternative 8...e6 is to free up a square for the knight's retreat. If White plays the immediate 9.c4, then a promising continuation would be 9...f5! 10.ef ♘xf6 11.♕d3 ♕b6, although after 9.a3 (and c2-c4 only after that) the square could come in handy.

9. ♗f1-c4 ♘d5-b6

After 9...♗e6!? 10.♘g5?! ♗g7 11.♘xe6 fe Gipslis had to struggle to draw against a clearly weaker opponent, Freisler (Pardubice 1996). Clearly, just for the sake of doubling Black's pawns it wasn't worth abandoning the e5 pawn to its fate.

10. ♗c4-b3 ♗f8-g7

Or 10...♗f5 11.♕h4 (11.♕e2!?) 11...e6 12.♗g5 ♗e7 13.♗xe7 ♕xe7 (Kr.Georgiev – Zmijanac, Sunny Beach 2011) 14.♕xe7+ ♔xe7 15.0-0 a5 16.a4 ♘d7 with excellent play. Grandmaster Krum Georgiev has achieved excellent results with 4.f4, but that had nothing to do with the opening.

11. 0-0 ♗c8-f5

12. ♕e4-f4 0-0

13. ♘b1-c3 ♕d8-b8?!

As we will now see, Black makes a technical error in his attempt to encircle the pawn. The correct play was 13...♘d7 14.♖e1 ♕a5, and White is in trouble.

14. ♖f1-e1 ♘b6-d7

15. e5-e6! f7xe6

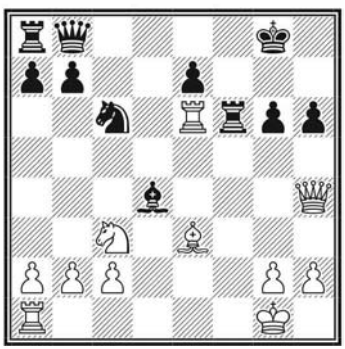
The continuation 15...♗xe6

16.♕xb8 ♖axb8 17.♖xe6! fe 18.♗xe6+ ♔h8 19.♗xd7 ♘d4 20.♗b5 ♘xf3+ 21.gf ♖xf3 most likely leads to a draw. With the queen on a5 the exchange sacrifice doesn't work, as White's queen is threatened by the rook.

16. ♕f4-h4 ♘d7-c5
17. ♘f3-g5 h7-h6
18. ♘g5xe6 ♗f5xe6

Kupreichik has clearly gained the initiative. That said, neither 18...♘xb3 19.ab g5 20.♕c4 ♖f7 21.♘xg7 ♔xg7, nor the move in the game totally extinguishes Black's chances.

19. ♗b3xe6+ ♘c5xe6
20. ♖e1xe6 ♗g7-d4+
21. ♗c1-e3 ♖f8-f6



22. ♖e6xe7!? ...

It seems like Kupreichik is deliberately raising the tension, as 22.♕e4 ♗xe3+ 23.♕xe3 ♔g7 24.♘d5 ♖xe6 25.♕xe6 ♕c8 would allow Varga to defend successfully.

22. ... ♖f6-f4
23. ♕h4-h3 ♘c6xe7
24. ♕h3-e6+ ♖f4-f7
25. ♗e3xd4 ♕b8-c8?

After 25...♕f4 26.♘e4 ♖d8 27.♘f6+ ♔f8 28.♘d7+ ♔g8 perpetual check would be the fair result of this sharp encounter.

26. ♕e6-e5 ♔g8-h7
27. ♘c3-e4 ♘e7-c6
28. ♘e4-f6+ ♔h7-g7??

The Hungarian chess player has got totally mixed up. With 28...♖xf6 29.♕xf6 ♘xd4 30.♕xd4 ♕xc2 31.♖e1 he can resist the white army's active play.

29. ♘f6-e8++ ♔g7-f8
30. ♕e5-h8+ ♔f8-e7
31. ♗d4-c5+ ♔e7-e6
32. ♖a1-e1+ ♔e6-d5
33. ♗c5-a3?! ...

33.♖d1+! ♔xc5 34.♕c3+ ♔b6 35.♕b3+ ♔a6 36.♖d5! was much simpler.

33. ... ♕c8-g4
34. ♕h8-g8?! ...

If 34.♔h1! ♕d4 35.c4+! ♔xc4 36.♘d6+ White destroys the queen's rook without losing his knight (as with 35.♘c7+?!).

34. ... ♕g4-d4+?

The players were probably in serious time trouble, and the trap 34...♕f5! 35.♖d1+ ♘d4 36.♘c7+?? ♔c6 37.♘xa8 ♕f1+! may well have worked. Even with the optimal move 36.h3! White still has to prove that the black king's long walk has been dangerous.

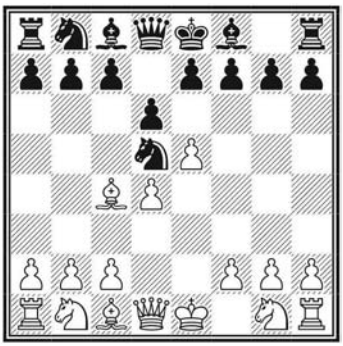
35. ♔g1-h1 ♕d4-f2
36. c2-c4+ ♔d5-d4
37. ♖e1-d1+ ♔d4-e5
38. ♖d1-d5+ ♔e5-e6

39. ♕g8xg6+ ♖f7-f6
40. ♘e8-c7#

It seems that the best counter to 4.f4 is 4...de 5.fe c5. With the slightest inaccuracy by White Black can easily gain the advantage.

Chapter 31. 3.d4 d6 4.♗c4

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♗f1-c4 ...



This not infrequent move by the bishop was analyzed back in 1925 by Hungarian master Balogh (hence it is called the Balogh Attack). According to the Megabase, this version was first seen in a game between Showalter and Torre (Chicago 1926). Later, 4.♗c4 became a favorite of Peruvian master Esteban Canal, but it was only adopted in regular practice less than half a century ago. Compared with 4.♘f3 it has an obvious advantage – there is no need to learn a mass of theoretical variations. Moreover, it avoids for the time being the ♗c8-g4 pin, and there is no obstacle to the advance of the f-pawn.

4. ... ♘d5-b6

The knight retreats from the center to a passive parking lot. But if at the same time White's king's bishop is taken out of the game then the end justifies the means.

The position after 4...e6 5.♘f3 is sometimes reached via 4.♘f3 e6 5.♗c4. Black needs to play a somewhat tiresome defense and he cannot allow himself to play aggressively here. For example, 5...♗e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.♕e2 ♖e8 8.a3 ♘d7 9.♗d3 ♘f8 10.c4 ♘b6 11.♘c3 d5 12.c5 ♘bd7 13.b4 c6 14.b5 f6 15.bc bc 16.♗f4 g5? (16...f5 is stronger) 17.ef ♗xf6 18.♗d6 with a clear advantage (Nun – Smajzr, Czech Republic 2012).

The continuation 4...de 5.de c6 6.♘f3 ♗g4 7.h3 ♗xf3 8.♕xf3 e6 is another way of reaching the 4.♘f3 ♗g4 5.h3 ♗xf3 6.♕xf3 de 7.de e6 8.♗c4 c6 variation. Black exchanges his problem bishop and strengthens the knight; nevertheless, the bishop pair and territorial advantage give

White the advantage. For example, 9.0-0 ♘d7 10.♖e1 ♕a5 11.♘d2 ♗e7 12.♕g3 g6 13.♘f3 h5?! (he should have hidden his king away with 13...b5 14.♗b3 0-0) 14.♗g5 ♕b4 (Ghaem Maghami – Chetverik, Bad Ragaz 2013) 15.♗xd5!? cd 16.c3 ♕c5 17.b4 ♕c4 18.♗xe7 ♔xe7 19.♘d2 ♕c7 20.c4, destroying the monarch's hide-out. Or 11.♗d2 ♕b6 12.♘c3!? ♕xb2?! 13.♘xd5! cd 14.♗xd5! ed 15.e6 fe 16.♖xe6+ ♔d8 17.♖ae1 with a crushing attack.

Caution! The f7 square needs special attention: 6.♘c3 ♘xc3?? 7.♗xf7+. In the game Mellado Trivino – Viot (Enghien les Bains 1995) Black defended the d5 square at the cost of going behind in development – 6...♗e6 7.♘f3 ♘d7 8.♘xd5 ♗xd5 9.♗xd5 ♕a5+ 10.♗d2 ♕xd5 11.♕e2 e6 12.0-0 ♗e7 13.♖fd1 ♕b5 14.c4 and then for example 14...♕xb2 15.♖ab1 ♕xa2 16.♖xb7 ♖d8 17.♕e1! ♕xc4 18.♗g5.

In Game 31 Black strengthened his knight without exchanging pawns.

5. ♗c4-b3 ...

After 5.e6? ♘xc4 6.ef+ ♔xf7 7.♕f3+ ♔e8 8.♕h5+ g6 9.♕b5+ ♕d7 10.♕xc4 White won the piece back in a roundabout way, but 10...♕g4! 11.♕d5 e6 or 11...c6 nevertheless leaves him without a pawn. And this is not the whole story! After 6...♔d7 7.♕g4+ e6 8.♗g5(?) h5 9.♕h4 (Gaggiottini – Tal, Merano 1981) the ex-world champion accepted the surrender of his opponent, who didn't even take the trouble to restore the piece balance. If 8.d5! ♕e7 9.♗g5 ♕xf7 10.♕xc4 ed 11.♕g4+ ♕e6+ 12.♕xe6+ ♔xe6 the number of pieces is equal, but White remains a pawn down.

5. ... d6xe5

5...d5!? would give the game a 'French' appearance, and with the opportunity to release the 'French' bishop from the pawn fence. After 6.♘e2 a5 7.c3 ♗f5 8.a4 e6 9.0-0 c5 10.dc ♗xc5 11.♘d4 ♗xd4 (11...♗g6 12.♗e3 ♕e7 13.♘d2 ♘c6 is also good) 12.cd ♘c6 13.♘c3 0-0 14.♘b5 ♘c4?! 15.♗a2 ♘b4 16.b3 ♗c2 17.♕f3 ♘b6 18.♗a3 ♕g5 19.♘d6 ♕d2 20.♕e3! ♕xe3 21.fe ♗d3 22.♖fc1 ♗a6 23.♖c7 ♖ab8 24.♗xb4 ab 25.♖ac1 (Tal – Spiridonov, Sochi 1973) Black's active pieces are partially swapped, partially beaten away, and all White has to do is bring the bishop back to life. Black can significantly strengthen his position (and at the same time introduce significant complications) via 14...f6! 15.♘d6 ♗g6 16.♗e3 fe 17.de ♘xe5 18.♘xb7 ♕e7 19.♘xa5 ♘bd7. Note, moreover, the queen's bishop can be sent via a different route – 6...e6 7.0-0 c5 8.c3 ♗d7 9.♗e3 cd 10.cd ♗b5 11.♘bc3 ♗a6 12.f4 g6. When comparing the 'white bishop on b3 – black knight on b6' pair, the knight has a noticeable advantage.

5...♘c6 is seen in Game 32, and 5...♗f5 in Game 33.

6. ♕d1-h5 ...

6.♕f3 does not pose any threat to Black, as the queen doesn't defend e5 and also takes away the best square for the king's knight. After 6...e6 7.de ♘c6 8.♕g3 a5 9.c3 a4 10.♗c2 ♘c4 11.♘f3 ♕d5 12.0-0 ♘4xe5 13.♘xe5 ♕xe5 14.♗f4 (Showalter – Torre, Chicago 1925) 14...♕b5! 15.♗e4 e5!? 16.♗xc6+ ♕xc6 17.♗xe5 ♗e6 18.♘d2 0-0-0 Black returned the extra pawn but managed to spirit his king to safety. It may have been more promising to send the queen's knight to c5. In that case, White risks getting into a pickle: 7...a5 8.a4 ♘a6 9.c3? ♗d7 10.♗c2 ♘c5 11.b3 ♗c6 12.♕g3 ♕d5 13.♘f3 ♘xb3 14.♗xb3 ♕xb3 15.♘d4 ♕d5 16.♘xc6 ♕xc6 (Frindt – Chetverik, Martin 1996). It would be better to accept the doubled pawns while maintaining equality – 9.♘c3 ♘c5 10.♗e3 ♗d7 11.♕g3 ♘xb3 12.cb ♘d5.

6. ... e7-e6

7. d4xe5 a7-a5

The continuation 7...♘c6 8.♘f3 ♘d4 9.♘xd4 ♕xd4 would turn the queen into a target. After 10.0-0 g6 11.♕f3 ♗g7 12.♗d2 0-0 13.♗c3 ♕h4 14.♘d2 a5 15.a4 ♘d7 16.♖fe1 the strengthened pawn on e5 cramps Black, but destroying it leads to a greater risk (12...♘d7 13.♗c3 ♘xe5 14.♕g3 ♕c5 15.♖e1 f6 16.♘d2 ♕e7 17.♘e4). Gopal versus Mogranzini (Beijing 2008) preferred a more reliable plan castling long: 8...g6 9.♕g4 h6 (preventing the bishop from getting to g5) 10.♘c3 ♗g7 11.♗f4 ♕e7 12.h4 ♗d7 13.♕g3 0-0-0 14.0-0-0 ♘a5 15.♔b1 ♗c6 16.♘d4 ♗d5 17.♘db5 a6 18.♘xd5 ed 19.♘c3 ♘xb3 20.ab ♖he8 21.♖he1 ♕e6 – and White's advantage is insignificant.

It seems that there are specific reasons to recommend 7...c5!? 8.c3 ♕d3!? Exchanging the queens reduced to zero the advantage of Amin versus Giri (Reykjavik 2013) after 9.♕f3 ♕xf3 10.♘xf3 ♗d7 11.♗f4 a5 12.♘a3 ♗c6 13.♘d2 a4 14.♗c2 ♘d5 15.♗g3 h5 16.h4 g6, moreover 9...c4!? 10.♕xd3 cd 11.♘f3 ♗d7 12.0-0 ♗c6 appears to be a better way of swapping.

9.♘a3!? is more principled. Again, the queen should avoid getting shot at: 9...♕e4+ 10.♘e2 ♗d7 11.♗c2 ♕xg2 12.♖g1 ♕d5 13.♘f4 ♕c6 14.♘h3 ♕c7 15.♗f4 (if 15.♘g5 ♕xe5+ 16.♗e4 g6 17.♕f3 f5 18.♗f4 fe 19.♗xe5 ef 20.♗xh8 the position is complicated but White's chances are better) 15...♘d5 16.♘c4 ♘xf4?! (he should have got off the hook with 16...g6 17.♗xg6!? fg 18.♖xg6 ♔d8 19.♗g5+ ♔c8 20.♖xe6!) 17.♘xf4 ♘c6 18.♖xg7! ♗xg7? 19.♘d6+ ♔d8 20.♕g5+ ♘e7 21.♕xg7 ♖g8 22.♕xf7 with a win (Phadke – Minhaz Uddin, Chennai 2011). This victory had much to do with the queen's knight, which should

have been chased away earlier – 10...c4!? 11.f3 ♕d5 12.♗c2 ♗xa3 13.ba ♘8d7 14.♗f4 ♘c5 15.0-0 ♘d3 with unclear complications.

8. a2-a4 ...

If 8.c3?! ♕d3 Black can expect to get more out of the game than if 7... c5 8.c3 ♕d3. In truth, after 9.♕f3 ♕xf3 10.♘xf3 a4 11.♗c2 ♘c6 12.0-0 ♖a5 13.♖e1 ♘c4 14.♖e4 ♘6xe5 15.♘xe5 ♖xe5 16.♖xe5 ♘xe5 17.♗xa4+ ♗d7 chances are equal, but 9...♕g6!? 10.h4 h5 11.♗g5 a4 12.♗d1 ♘c6 leads to an advantage.

All means are good to attack the e-pawn! Including bringing the rook to a5 after a5-a4. That said, White usually gains compensation for the lost pawn. In the variation with 8.a3 a4 9.♗a2 ♘c6 10.♘f3 ♘d4 11.♘xd4 ♕xd4 12.♘c3 ♖a5!? 13.♗e3 ♕xe5 14.♕xe5 ♖xe5 15. 0-0-0 the weakness on c7 is keenly felt. After 12.♕e2 ♖a5!? 13.f4 ♘d5 14.c3 ♕b6 15.c4 ♘e7 16.♗e3 ♕c6 17.♘c3 ♘f5 18.0-0-0 ♘xe3 19.♕xe3 ♗e7 (Summerscale – Zelcic, Cannes 1997) the position is about equal; however, 15...♖c5!? would force White to think.

8. ... ♘b8-a6

Liquidating the pawn on e5 would enable the transfer of the bishop to c6 via d7 and then its swap on f3: 8...♗d7 9.♘f3 ♗c6 10.0-0 g6 11.♕h3 ♗xf3 12.♕xf3 ♘c6 13.♖d1 ♘d7 (Skytte – Sulskis, Borup 2009) 14.♘c3 ♗g7 15.♘e4 ♘cxe5 16.♕c3 0-0 17.♗g5 ♕c8 18.♕d2. Black would be under pressure.

After 8...♘c6 9.♘f3 throwing in a2-a4 and a7-a5 is most likely better for Black. For example, in the variation 9...♘d7!? 10.♗xe6?! g6 11.♗xd7+ ♗xd7 12.♕g5 ♘b4 13.♘a3 ♗xa4.

9. ♘g1-f3 ...

Caution! The queen on h5 is not out of danger. If 9.♘c3 ♘c5 10.♗g5 ♗e7 11.♖d1 ♗d7 12.♗e3 ♘xb3 13.cb ♘d5!? 14.♘xd5 ed 15.♖xd5 ♕c8 16.♖d4 ♖a6! White defends against ♗d7-g4 (and at the same time, against ♗d7-c6) at the cost of significantly worsening his position. Djuric and Loeffler (Formia 1994) got to an equal ending after 12.h4 0-0 13.♘f3 ♘xb3 14.cb f5 15.♘d4 ♕e8 16.♕xe8 ♖fxe8 17.♗xe7 ♖xe7 18.f4 c5 19.♘db5 ♗c6.

9. ... ♘a6-c5

10. ♗b3-a2!? ...

Another queen trap is found in 10.♗g5 ♗e7 11.♘c3 ♘xb3 12.cb h6 13.♖d1 ♗d7?! 14.♗e3 ♘d5 15.♘xd5 ed 16.♖xd5? g6. That said, some unpleasant tendencies have also been seen for Black, and after 15.0-0 ♗c6 16.♘d4 ♕d7 17.♘xc6 ♕xc6 18.♘xd5 ed 19.♕f3 ♖d8 (Tesik – Chetverik, Zalakaros 2010) 20.♖c1! ♕d7 21.♕g3 g5 22.e6! ♕xe6 23.♖fe1 the game could have ended rather sadly for Black.

The bishop retreat is linked with sacrificing a pawn, whose correctness is not obvious.

10. ... ♗c8-d7

11. ♘b1-c3 ♘b6xa4

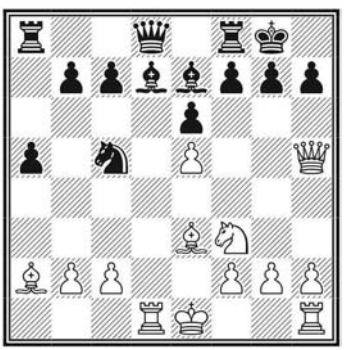
12. ♗c1-g5 ...

Venturing 12.♘g5 is premature: 12...♕e7 13.♘xa4 ♗xa4 14.♗e3 g6 15.♕e2 ♗c6 16.0-0 ♘d7 17.f4 ♗g7 18.f5!? gf 19.♕h5 ♘f8 20.♖xf5! ef 21.♖d1 ♘g6 22.♗xf7+ ♔f8 23.♗a2, and White's activity is no more than drawing (Milosevic – Baburin, Switzerland 1992). After 16...♗g7 17.f4 0-0 18.♗c4 b6 Black's chances look better.

12. ... ♗f8-e7
13. ♘c3xa4 ♘c5xa4
14. ♖a1-d1 ...

It is hard to decide whether it is worth winning some time after 14.0-0-0 at the cost of risks to the king's safety. A possible continuation is 14...♘c5 15.♖d4 ♗xg5+ 16.♘xg5 ♕e7 17.♖hd1 (with compensation for the pawn) 17...h6 18.♘xf7!? ♕xf7 19.♕xf7+ ♔xf7 20.♖c4 ♖ad8 21.♖xc5 ♗c6 with a likely draw.

14. ... ♘a4-c5
15. ♗g5-e3 0-0

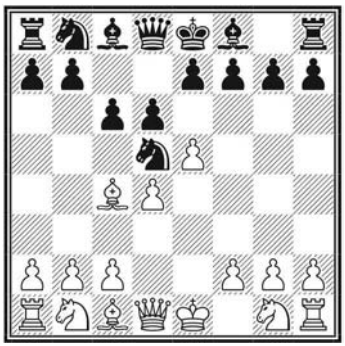


Let's take the bull by the horns: 16.♘g5 h6 17.♗xc5 ♗xc5 (17...hg 18.h4! g4 19.♗e3 g3 20.0-0 with the initiative) 18.♘e4 ♕e7 19.♘xc5 ♕xc5 20.♖xd7 ♕b4+ 21.♖d2 ♕xb2 22.c4 ♕a1+ 23.♕d1 ♕xe5+ 24.♔f1 – Black has picked up three pawns for his piece, and we should probably also take the distant passed pawn into account. The game Rogulj – Fahrner (Austria 2012) continued 16.0-0 ♕e8 17.♗xc5 ♗xc5 18.♘g5 h6 19.♘e4 ♗e7 20.♘f6+ ♗xf6 21.ef ♔h7 22.fg ♖g8 23.♖d3 ♖xg7 24.♖fd1 ♗c6 25.g3 ♗e4 – the white bishop failed to join the game and so there is no advantage here. Therefore, the old game Sax - Ghinda (Bath 1973) remains a role model: 16.c3! (opening a new diagonal for the bishop) 16...♕e8 17.♗xc5 ♗xc5 18.♘g5 h6 19.♘e4 ♗e7 20.♘f6+! ♗xf6 (20...gf? 21.♖d3) 21.ef ♖a6 22.fg ♔xg7 23.♕e5+ ♔h7 24.♕xc7 with an obvious advantage in piece setup. So there are no doubts about the correctness of 10.♗a2.

Game 31
I.Glek – A.Ivanov
Tomsk 2001

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♗f1-c4 c7-c6

In this version Black doesn't have to worry about the knight developing to c3, as he calmly takes on c3 – with the d-file closed there is no sacrifice on f7.



5. f2-f4!? ...

Igor Glek has played this move several times with success. After 5.♘f3 g6 or 5...de 6.♘xe5 we are in well-known variations with 4.♘f3. We will briefly look at the continuation 5...♗g4 6.h3 ♗xf3 7.♕xf3 de 8.de e6 via 4...de 5.de c6.

We also need to check the development of the queen: 5.♕f3?! leaves the c2 and e5 squares unguarded (5...de 6.de ♗e6 7.♘e2 ♘d7 8.♕g3 ♘b4 9.♗b3 ♘xe5! 10.0-0 ♗xb3 11.♕xb3 e6 12.a3 ♘d5 13.♕xb7 ♗d6), and, therefore, 5.♕e2 is preferable. In this case, the queen's bishop sits comfortably on f5 and Black can castle on either side. Black is in fact fine: 5...de 6.de ♗f5 7.h3 e6 8.♘f3 ♘d7 9.0-0 ♗e7 10.♗d3 ♗xd3 11.♕xd3 ♕c7 12.c4 ♘b4 13.♕e2 a5 14.♘c3 0-0 15.♖d1 ♖fd8 16.b3 h6 17.♗f4 ♘c5 (Turner – V.Sergeev, Ostrava 2011).

5. ... ♗c8-f5

Against Lehnert (Boeblingen 2000) Glek launched an attack with a kingside fianchetto: 5...g6 6.♘f3 ♗g7 7.♘c3 ♘xc3 8.bc 0-0 9.0-0 ♕c7 10.♘g5 d5 11.♗d3 h6 12.♘f3 c5 13.♗e3 c4 14.♗e2 f5?! 15.♘h4 ♔h7 16.g4 e6 17.gf ef 18.♔h1 ♖g8 19.♖g1 ♗f8 20.♕f1 ♘c6 21.♖g3 ♗d7 22.♕g2 ♘e7 23.♖g1 ♕c6 24.♗c1 ♗e8 25.♗a3 ♗f7 26.♖h3 ♕e8 27.♘f3 ♔g7 28.♖xh6! ♔xh6 29.♕g5+ ♔h7 30.♕h4+ ♗h6 31.♗xe7 – Black has defended g6 with everything that he can, but h6 failed to withstand even a whiff of an attack. Obviously, without the onrushing f-pawn it would be much harder to prosecute the attack.

6. ♘g1-e2 d6xe5

7. f4xe5 ...

He had no choice here – if 7.de?! e6 8.0-0 ♗c5+ 9.♔h1 ♘b4 he loses a pawn without any hint of compensation.

7. ... e7-e6

8. 0-0 ♗f8-e7

9. ♗c4-d3 ...

A year later, in a game with Konopka (Austria 2002), Glek continued 9.♘g3 ♗g6 10.♗d3 0-0 11.♗xg6 fg 12.♖xf8+ ♗xf8 13.c4 ♘b6 14.♕g4 ♕d7 15.c5 ♘c8 16.♘c3 b6 17.♗e3 ♘a6 18.♘ge4 ♘e7 19.♘d6 ♘b4 20.♖f1 ♘f5 21.♗f2 ♗e7 22.♕e2 ♘d5 23.♘xd5 cd 24.g4 ♘h6. The difference in the position of the knights is what gives White a clear advantage here. The drawback of ♘e2-g3 is that it cedes control of d4, and 10...c5! would have made the novelty look doubtful.

9. ... ♗f5xd3

White gains a significant spatial advantage in the variation 9...♗g4 10.h3 ♗h5 11.g4 ♗g6 12.c4 ♘b4 13.♗xg6 hg 14.a3 ♘4a6 15.♕d3.

10. ♕d1xd3 ♗e7-g5?

Exchanging the bishop exposes the dark squares and gives nothing in return. He should have played 10...c5 11.♕g3 cd 12.♕xg7 ♖f8 13.♕xh7 ♕b6 14.♔h1 ♘e3 15.♗xe3 de with good prospects in the complications.

11. ♘b1-d2 ♗g5xd2
12. ♗c1xd2 0-0
13. c2-c4 ♘d5-e7
14. ♗d2-b4 ♘b8-a6
15. ♗b4-d6 ♕d8-d7
16. ♕d3-a3 ♖f8-e8
17. ♘e2-g3 ♘e7-f5
18. ♘g3xf5 e6xf5
19. ♖f1-f2 g7-g6
20. ♖a1-f1 ♘a6-c7

It was impossible to prevent White's next move: if 20...h5 21.♕g3 ♔h7 22.♕h3 he wins immediately.

21. g2-g4! ♘c7-e6
22. d4-d5 ...

Glek was a bit slow finishing the game off (22.gf ♘xd4 23.♕g3 ♕xf5 24.♕h4!).

22. ... ♘e6-g7?

In his turn, Black fails to put up decent resistance, which was possible with 22...♘g5 23.gf ♘e4 24.fg hg 25.♖f4 cd 26.♕a5!

23. g4xf5 ♘g7xf5
24. ♖f2xf5!

1-0

Game 32

D.Gross – U.Schwanengel

Imperia 2003

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♗f1-c4 ♘d5-b6
5. ♗c4-b3 ♘b8-c6



6. e5-e6!? ...

The slowing pawn sacrifice is a common theme in the Alekhine Defense. The reason for using it here is that Black cannot capture with his bishop due to the position of the knight on c6.

The exchange on d6 has almost never been met in practice among strong players. The following line is probably fine for Black: 6.ed ♕xd6 7.♘f3 ♗f5 8.0-0 ♘a5 9.♘e5 e6 10.♗f4 ♕d8 11.♕h5 (Zhizmer – Sikula, Kiev 2002) 11...g6 12.♕d1 f6 13.♘g4 ♘xb3 14.ab ♘d5 15.♗d2 h5 16.♘e3 ♘xe3 17.♗xe3 c5!

6. ... f7xe6
7. ♘g1-f3 ♘c6-a5

If 7...d5 looks like a strategically

dubious decision, then 7...e5!? 8.de d5 deserves recommendation. That said, 9.♘c3!? should be met with precise play. After 9...♗g4?! 10.♘xd5 e6 11.♗g5! ♗xf3 12.gf ♕xg5?! 13.♘xc7+ ♔f7 14.♗xe6+ ♔g6 15.f4 ♕g2 16.♕d3+ ♔h6 17.0-0-0 (Kalod – Hudecek, Luhacovice 1993) Black's position looks bad despite the material equality, and 12...♗b4+ 13.c3 ♕xg5 14.♘xc7+ ♔e7 is not much better. He should go for the variation with 9...e6 10.♘e2 ♗e7 11.0-0 0-0 12.c3 ♖xf3!? 13.gf ♘xe5, which looks like a typical 'French' structure.

7...g6 is considered in Game 83 (see Chapter 72) after 4.♘f3 g6 5.♗c4 ♘b6 6.♗b3 ♘c6 7.e6 fe, transposing.

8. ♘f3-g5 ♘a5xb3
9. a2xb3 ♘b6-d5
10. 0-0 ...

The strongest objection to 10.♘c3 is 10...♕d7 11.0-0 ♘xc3 12.bc ♕b5 13.♖e1 ♕f5. This way, winning back the pawn is accompanied by a queen swap, and Black has every chance of drawing.

10. ... g7-g6
11. ♖f1-e1 ...

Games may be different, but the strategic pattern is the same – sieging and destroying the e6 pawn with a minor difference in nuances. After 11.♕f3 ♘f6 12.♖e1 c6 13.♘xe6 ♗xe6 14.♖xe6 ♗g7 15.♕e2 ♕d7 16.♗g5 ♔f7 17.♖e3 ♖he8 (Thorhallsson – Hjartarson, Reykjavik 2005) 18.♘c3 it doesn't pay for Black to return his knight to the center, so he is far from achieving equality.

11. ... ♗f8-g7
12. c2-c4 ♘d5-f6

Or 12...♘b4 13.♘xe6 ♗xe6 14.♖xe6 0-0 15.♘c3 ♕d7 16.d5 c6 17.♗g5 ♖f7 18.♕d2 – the knight on b4 is undefended and doesn't threaten anything.

13. ♘g5xe6 ♗c8xe6
14. ♖e1xe6 0-0
15. ♘b1-c3 ♕d8-d7

Ovetchkin once demonstratively destroyed the position of Jamrich (Budapest 1996), without encountering even a pretense of resistance: 15...c6 16.♗g5 ♖f7 17.d5 c5?! 18.♕e2 ♕d7 19.♖e1 h6 20.♗xf6 ♗xf6 21.♘e4 ♖af8 22.♘xf6+ ef 23.♕d3 ♔g7 24.h4 h5 25.♕g3 ♖d8 26.f4 ♔h7 27.f5! On the other hand, if 17...cd 18.♗xf6 ♖xf6 19.♖xf6 ♗xf6 20.♕xd5+ ♔h8 21.♕xb7 ♖b8 22.♕xa7 ♖xb3 Black has clear counterplay.

16. ♕d1-e2 ♖f8-f7
17. ♗c1-g5 c7-c6

Given that Gross refrained from playing d4-d5, Black could have considered freeing himself with 17...♘h5 18.♖e4 (18.♖d1 ♗f6!?) 18...e5 19.de ♗xe5.

18. ♖a1-e1 ♖a8-e8
19. d4-d5 ♔g8-h8
20. h2-h4 a7-a6

Black has freed up the square for his knight, but for some reason hasn't used it. 21.♘e4 would have been strong here (21...♘g8??

22.♘xd6), whereas after the move played Black gets to aim at f2.

21. ♗g5xf6 ♗g7xf6
22. ♘c3-e4 ♗f6-d4
23. ♕e2-d2 c6-c5
24. ♖e1-e2 ♔h8-g7?

A fatal error. If 24...♖ef8 the reply 25.h5 is toothless due to 25...gh and 26...♖g8. Black was probably expecting 25.♘xd6?! ed 26.♖xe8 (without check!) 26...♖xf2 27.♕xd4+! cd 28.♔xf2 ♕f5+ 29.♔g1 d3 30.♖d2 b5 with sufficient counterplay to draw.

25. h4-h5 ♖e8-f8
26. h5xg6 h7xg6
27. ♕d2-g5 ♗d4-f6
28. ♕g5-g4 ♖f8-h8

The little combination on move 30 is available because the queen isn't defended. But 28...♖d8 doesn't help due to 29.♖e3!, and to defend he will still have to bring his rook closer to h6 and the combination works.

29. ♘e4-g5 ♖f7-f8



30. ♖e6xe7+! ♕d7xe7
31. ♖e2xe7+ ♗f6xe7
32. ♘g5-e6+ ♔g7-h7
33. ♘e6xf8+ ♖h8xf8
34. ♕g4-e6 ♗e7-f6
35. ♕e6xd6 ♔h7-g7
36. ♕d6xc5
1-0

Game 33
N.Ristic – A.Shabalov
Geneve 1992

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♗f1-c4 ♘d5-b6
5. ♗c4-b3 ♗c8-f5



Just like in Game 32, after the bishop is developed Black needs to deal with e5-e6. If 6.e6!? fe 7.♘f3 ♕d7 8.0-0 ♘c6 9.a4 ♘a5 10.♗a2 ♘xa4 11.♘g5 d5 12.♗b3 ♘xb3 13.ab ♘b6 14.♗f4 h6 15.♘f3 (Thorhallsson – Sigurjonsson, Reykjavik 1994) the positional compensation for the two pawns is obvious. If he wants, instead of blocking the center White can break

it open with 11.♖e1 ♘c6 12.♘h4 d5 13.c4.

However, with the knight on b8 Black has the choice of capturing with his bishop, which is probably stronger. A typical example would be: 6...♗xe6 7.♗xe6 fe 8.♘f3 ♘c6 9.0-0 ♕d7 10.♘g5 g6 11.♖e1 ♘d8 12.♕d3 ♗h6 (a useful swap) 13.♘c3 ♗xg5 14.♗xg5 ♘f7 15.♗h4 0-0-0 16.a4 (Nun – Konopka, Czech Republic 2008) 16...g5!? 17.♗g3 ♘d5 with approximately equal chances in a complicated position.

6. ♕d1-f3 ...

The double attack has led to unusually interesting complications. Whereas 6.♘f3 would lead to a fairly standard continuation: 6...e6 7.♕e2 ♗e7 8.♘bd2 0-0 9.a4 de 10.de a5 (10...c5 11.a5 ♘d5 12.♘c4 ♕c7 13.0-0 ♘c6 is also good) 11.0-0 ♘c6 12.♖d1 ♘d4 13.♘xd4 ♕xd4 14.♘c4 ♕e4 15.♕xe4 ♗xe4 16.♘xb6 cb 17.♗e3 ♗c5 18.♗xc5 bc 19.f3 ♗c6 20.♖d2 ♖fd8 21.♖ad1 ♖xd2 22.♖xd2 g5 (D'Costa – Baburin, Cork 2005).

6. ... e7-e6!?

Black invites the queen in for tea, but plans to kidnap her. If 6... ♕c8 the exchange combination 7.♗xf7+!? ♔xf7 8.g4 g6 9.gf ♕xf5 10.♕xb7 de 11.♘f3 ♗g7 12.de ♗xe5 doesn't promise any advantage – the black queen is in the right place. After 7.♘e2 e6 8.0-0 ♘c6 9.ed ♗xd6 10.c4 ♘d7 11.c5 ♗e7 12.♗a4 ♘cb8 13.♘bc3 0-0 14.♗e3 (Fontaine – Gozzoli, Lille 2011) Black is cramped but he once again has the chance to turn the position of the queen to his advantage – 8...c5!? 9.dc dc 10.c4 ♘c6 11.♗f4 g5!? 12.♗xg5 ♘xe5 13.♕c3 ♖g8 14.f4 ♘c6 15.♕e3 ♗g7 with counterplay (K.Berg – Rasmussen, Aarhus 2003). Even if we consider 14.♕xe5!? ♖xg5 15.♘bc3 ♗g7 16.♕e3 ♖g6 17.♖ad1 ♕c6 18.♘g3 to be an improvement, the 'stab' with g7-g5 was definitely not mandatory.

7.a4!? was worth considering. If 7...a5, then 8.ed ed 9.♕g3, slowing Black's development on the kingside. If 7...e6 8.a5 ♘8d7 9.♕g3 de 10.de ♘c5 11.♘c3 ♘xb3 12.cb ♘a6 13.♘ge2 c5 14.0-0 ♕c6 15.♗e3 ♗g6 16.♘f4 ♗e7 17.♖fd1 White has a clear spatial advantage (Soltis – V.Bagirov, Moscow 1989).

7. ♕f3xb7 ...

He should accept the gift. After 7.♕g3?! de 8.de c5 9.♘a3 c4 10.♘xc4 ♘xc4 11.♗xc4 ♗xc2 12.♗d2 ♕d4 13.♗b5+ ♘c6 14.♗xc6+ bc 15.♘f3?! Kengis against Romero (Manila 1992) declined to take on b2, although he should have done so.

7. ... d6-d5

Also necessary. If 7...de?! 8.de ♘8d7 9.♘f3 a5 10.♕c6 a4 11.♗c4 ♘xc4 12.♕xc4 White successfully consolidates.

8. ♘b1-c3 ...

The knight rushes to rescue the queen. 8.♘e2 has also been played,

so as to meet 8...♗b4+ by defending with the bishop. Black is fine after 9.♗d2 a5 10.♗a4+ ♘8d7 11.♗b5 0-0 12.0-0 ♗xc2 13.♕c6 ♗f5 or 11...c6!? 12.♗xc6 ♖b8 13.♕a6 ♕c7 14.♗xd7+ ♘xd7 15.♘ec3 0-0 16.0-0 ♖fc8.

Another idea is to divert the knight from defending the rook with the help of 8.♗a4+. In that case, the fearless queen heads even deeper into the enemy camp, and after 8...♘xa4 9.♕xa8 ♕c8 10.♕xa7 ♗b4+ 11.c3?! ♗c2!! she will need to be traded. This position is wildly complicated now (11.♗d2 ♘b6 12.♗xb4 ♘c6 13.♕a3 ♘xd4 14.♕a5 ♘xc2+ 15.♔e2).

8. ... ♗f8-b4
9. ♘g1-e2 ...

He needs to prepare a replacement. If 9.♗d2 0-0 10.♘f3 ♗xc3 11.♗xc3 a5! 12.♗a4 f6! 13.ef gf the threat of ♖f8-f7 and c7-c6 is quite unpleasant for the queen.

9. ... 0-0
10. 0-0 a7-a5
11. ♘c3-b5 ♕d8-d7
12. a2-a4 ...

After 12.♘xc7 ♘a6 13.♕xb6 ♘xc7 14.a3 ♖fb8 15.♕xb8+ ♖xb8 16.ab ab 17.♗d2 both material is equal and the position is about equal (albeit very complicated).

12. ... ♖f8-c8

If 12...♘a6 13.♘a7 ♘b8 Black plans 14...♖xa7! 15.♕xa7 ♕c8, hence the knight has to retreat. Here the players also began to repeat moves, but Shabalov nevertheless decided he should prove his rating advantage.

13. ♘b5-a7 ♖c8-e8
14. ♘a7-b5 ♘b8-a6
15. ♘b5-a7 ♖a8xa7!
16. ♕b7xa7 ♕d7-c8

An alternative is 16...♖a8!? 17.♕b7 ♘b8! 18.c3 ♗e7 19.c4 ♘c6 20.cd ed 21.♗xd5 ♕xd5 22.♕xc7 ♗d8 23.♕d6 ♘b4 24.♕xd5 ♘bxd5. The white pawns are blocked, hence refusing a draw appears justified.

17. ♘e2-c3 ♖e8-e7
18. ♘c3-b5 ...

Changing of the guard! He could also have considered swapping the bishop via 18.♘a2 ♖d7! 19.♘xb4 ab 20.♗d2 ♘a8! 21.♗xb4! c6 22.♕xd7 ♕xd7 23.♗a3 – this fortress is rock solid.

18. ... ♘b6-a8!
19. ♘b5-d6? ...

The knight leaves its guard post too early. On the way it could have grabbed a rook and a pair of pawns prior to its demise: 19.c3 c6 20.cb ♖xa7 21.♘xa7 ♕b7 22.♘xc6 ab 23.♘d8 ♕d7 24.♘xf7 ♕xf7. Moreover, it's hard to agree with Houdini's compliments addressed in favour of White's position.

19. ... ♗b4xd6
20. e5xd6 ♖e7-d7
21. ♗c1-d2 c7-c5
22. ♕a7xa6 ♕c8xa6
23. d4xc5 ♕a6-c6
24. ♗d2-e3 e6-e5
25. c2-c3 ♖d7-b7
26. ♖a1-a3 ♗f5-e6
27. ♖f1-d1 f7-f5

Black has a lot of good continuations. For example, 27...d4 28.♗xe6 de 29.d7 ♖xd7 30.♗xd7 e2 31.♖e1 ♕xd7. He can add force to the move d5-d4 with the help of 27...♖b8!? or he can move his king closer to his pawns. But off-stage there was a pretty combination waiting to be found...

28. f2-f4 ...



28. ... e5xf4?!

... which was: 28...♔f7! 29.fe ♘c7!! 30.dc ♖xb3! 31.♖xb3 ♕xa4 32.c8♕ ♗xc8 33.e6+ ♔e8. The black king avoids check from the enemy rook and White faces a catastrophe.

29. ♗e3-d4 g7-g5
30. ♖d1-d2 ♔g8-f7
31. ♗b3-d1! g5-g4
32. ♗d1-e2 ♗e6-d7
33. ♗e2-d3?! ...

The players have been unnaturally inventive, but they nevertheless fail to achieve the heights of computers. The clever bishop manoeuvre would have been fittingly completed by 33.♗b5! ♖xb5 34.ab ♕xb5 35.♖a1, and joining the battle via e1.

33. ... ♖b7-b8?!

♘a8-c7 on move 28 would have blocked the 7th rank, while here it would have advantageously opened the 6th: 33...♘c7!! 34.dc ♕h6! 35.♖c2 g3 34.h3 f3! (35.gf? ♖xb2!).

34. ♖a3-a1 ♖b8-e8
35. b2-b4 f4-f3?!
36. b4-b5 ♕c6-c8
37. c5-c6?! ...

White has made so much progress on the queenside that the move played looks like he is simply trying to reduce tension. By playing 37.gf gf 38.♖f2 Ristic could have refuted the untimely advance of the f-pawn.

37. ... ♗d7xc6
38. b5xc6 ♕c8xc6
39. ♗d3-b5?! ...

39.♗xf5 would have forced Black to play accurately. It looks as though both players were in time trouble.

39. ... ♕c6xd6
40. ♗b5xe8+ ♔f7xe8
41. ♖a1-e1+ ♔e8-f7
42. ♖d2-f2 ♔f7-g6?

Indirectly confirming the hypothesis about time trouble. Black can easily get a draw with 42... ♘c7 43.gf g3 44.♖fe2 gh+ 45.♔h1 ♕g3.

43. g2xf3 h7-h5
44. f3xg4 h5xg4
45. ♖e1-e5 ♕d6-d7
46. h2-h3 g4xh3
47. ♖e5-e3 ♕d7-d6
48. ♖e3xh3 f5-f4
49. ♖f2-h2 ...

49.♖g2+ ♔f5 50.♔f2 is preferable, in order to add the king to the attack.

49. ... ♔g6-f5

50. ♖h3-h6 ...

At the same time, 50.♖h5+ ♔e4 51.♖2h3 ♘c7 52.♖e5+ ♕xe5 53.♗xe5 ♔xe5 only leads to a draw with accurate defense by Black. d5-d4 follows with an inevitable transposition to an acceptable knight vs rook ending.

50. ... ♕d6-b8

51. ♖h2-e2 f4-f3?

The pawn defended the king much better when it was on the fourth rank. After 51...♕b1+ 52.♔h2 ♔g4 there is no obvious win.

52. ♖e2-e5+ ♔f5-g4

53. ♖h6-g6+ ♔g4-f4

54. ♖g6-f6+ ...

One step from victory (54.♖ee6!) Ristic decided that he had had enough adventure for one day and called a halt to the struggle.

54. ... ♔f4-g4

55. ♖h6-g6+

½ - ½

This variation's concept has revealed itself to us in all of its surprising simplicity. White strengthens the pawn on e5 as a starting point for developing the initiative (predominantly on the kingside). Black dreams of destroying this pawn or, at least, tying down the white army to defending it. The chances of achieving their aims are approximately equal for each player.

Part 7
The Four Pawns Attack. Approaching the tabiya

Introduction

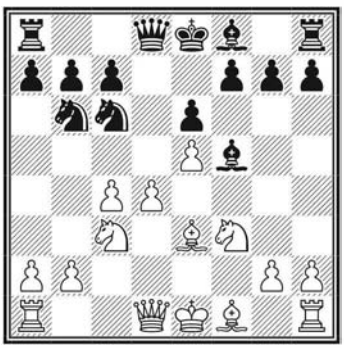
1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**f2-f4**	**...**



We have already seen this continuation from Game 2 of the history section. It's insufficient for White to occupy a small center with pawns and so he enlarges the center. The advanced infantryman has been granted reinforcements, but in doing so the home front has opened up and White has lost a tempo in development. Moreover, Black has gained a bonus in the form of the right to choose from a number of different defenses.

Let's go a little further forwards.

5.	**...**	**d6xe5**
6.	**f4xe5**	**♘b8-c6**
7.	**♗c1-e3**	**♗c8-f5**
8.	**♘b1-c3**	**e7-e6**
9.	**♘g1-f3**	**...**



The main position of the Four Pawns Attack serves as the dividing line between Parts 6 and 7. Any deviations from the moves given above are considered in Part 6, but variations beginning with this tabiya are discussed in Part 7. And we flag in advance the fact that there are many possible move orders here, hoping that they don't confuse either the authors of this book or adherents of the Alekhine Defense.

Chapter 32. The Planinc Gambit

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**f2-f4**	**g7-g5!?**



There is nothing surprising that the idea of this sacrifice first came to Yugoslav master Albin Planinc. He was even more 'Tal' than Tal himself when it came to combination play. At least the former world champion did not base his opening repertoire on the King's Gambit or experiments such as 5...g5.

This 'extended fianchetto' undermines White's strong pawn chain and allows the bishop to develop on g7, from where it takes aim at the now weakened e5 square. On the other hand, Black has significantly weakened his kingside and he needs to find compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

6. e5xd6 ...

Objectively the best continuation. The queen sortie with 6.♕h5 looks tempting, but with accurate defense by Black is insufficient to gain the advantage: 6...gf 7.♘f3 ♕d7! (in order to propose a queen swap from the f5 or g4 squares) 8.♘g5 ♕f5 9.g4?! ♕g6 10.ed cd 11.c5 ♕xh5 12.gh dc 13.dc ♘d5 14.♗c4 e6 15.♘ge4 ♘e3 16.♗xe3 fe (Durao – Chetverik, Cappelle-la-Grande 2005). Even if White captures the pawn on e3 there is still a pair of connected passed pawns in reserve. 9.♗d3! is stronger with perpetual check after 9...♕xd3 10.♘xf7 ♕e4+ (10...♗g4?? 11.♘xd6++ ♔d7 12. e6+!) 11.♔f1 ♕d3+ 12.♔e1 ♕e4+.

The typical 'anti-Alekhine' move 6.a4 isn't convincing here either, given that the knight doesn't mind at all retreating to d7 to attack the e5 square. White's helpless play in the game Walter – Chetverik (Neustadt 2014) accorded Black a murderous advantage in development: 6...♗f5 7.♘c3?! gf 8.a5 ♘6d7 9.♕f3? (it would have been better to take on f4 straight away or to throw in 9.ed cd first) 9...♘c6 10.♕xf4 e6 11.♘f3 de 12.de ♖g8 13.h3 ♘cxe5!? (here and on the next move ♘c6-b4 is more solid) 14.♘xe5 ♗d6 15.♘xf7 ♔xf7 16.♕d2 ♗g3+ 17.♔d1 ♘c5 18.♘e2 ♘b3! After 7.ed ♕xd6 8.a5 ♘6d7 9.fg e5, or after 7.fg ♘c6 8.a5 ♘d7 9.e6 fe 10.♗d3 ♗g7, the position is probably equal.

In Game 34 White preferred 6.♘c3, without committing in the center.

6. ... ♕d8xd6

The original game in this line, Tringov — Planinc (Varna 1970), counted against playing 6...gf. After 7.dc ♕xc7 8.♘c3 e5 the most convincing continuation is 9.c5 ♘6d7 10.♘f3, destroying the e5-f4 pawn chain. On the other hand, 6...cd!? 7.fg ♗g7 (with an advantage in development and pressure on the center) deserves to be tested in practice. Houdini somewhat overestimates White's chances here.

7. c4-c5 ...

Now, the knight sits comfortably in the center, whereas the queen now feels uncomfortable. If 7.♗e2 he should continue 7...c5, and if 7.♘c3 then 7...gf 8.♗e2 e5! 9.c5 ♕xd4 10.cb ♕xd1+ 11.♗xd1 ab with three pawns for the piece and a relatively good position. Much worse would be 7...♗g7? 8.♗e2 ♕xd4? 9.♕xd4 ♗xd4 10.♘b5 ♗xg1 11.♘c7+ ♔d8 12.♘xa8 ♗d4 13.♘xb6 ab 14.♗d2 gf 15.♗xf4 ♘c6 16.♖d1 with White the exchange up and in an excellent position (Migot – Chetverik, Metz 2013).

The continuation 6.fg? de 7.de ♕xd1+ 8.♔xd1 ♘c6 is no good for White, but, changing the structure in the center, he can take on g5 a bit later. Now, 7.fg ♗g7 8.c5 leads to the main line, but Black still has problems to solve in the variations 7...c5 8.♘c3 ♕xd4 9.♕xd4 cd 10.♘b5 ♘a6 11.♘f3 and 7...♘c6 8.d5 ♘e5 9.♘c3 ♗g7 10.♗e3 ♘g4 11.♗d4 ♕f4 12.♘f3 ♘e3 13.g3 ♗xd4 14.gf ♗xc3+ 15.bc ♘xd1 16.♖xd1.

7. ... ♕d6-e6+

8. ♔e1-f2 ...

In the Planinc Gambit exchanging queens is often unattractive for White, even when he is a pawn up. White here has a bad pawn structure, while the black pieces are very active: 8.♕e2? ♘d5 9.fg ♗g7 10.♘f3 ♘c6 11.♕xe6 ♗xe6 12.♗b5 ♘db4 13.♘a3 0-0-0 14.♗xc6 ♘xc6 15.♘c2 ♗f5 16.♘e3 ♗g6 (Sieber – Chetverik, Worms 2006).

In an email game Kranzl – Baumgardt (2000) White gained success 8.♗e2!? ♘d5 9.fg ♗g7 10.♘f3 ♘c6 11.♘c3 0-0 12.♕d2! ♘xc3 13.bc ♕d5 14.0-0 e5 15.♗b2 ed 16.cd ♗g4 17.♗d1! ♕d7 18.♗a4 ♖ad8 19.♔h1 ♖fe8 20.♕f2. Black's position is definitely poor here, but with the help of 12...b6 13.cb ♘xb6 he could have resisted stubbornly.

8. ... ♘b6-d5

9. f4xg5 h7-h6

It's useful to open the file on the kingside where the white king is hanging around. But to carry out the attack while circumventing White's solid center is problematic. If 9...♗g7 10.♘f3 ♘c6 11.♗b5 the backward pawn is easily defensible.

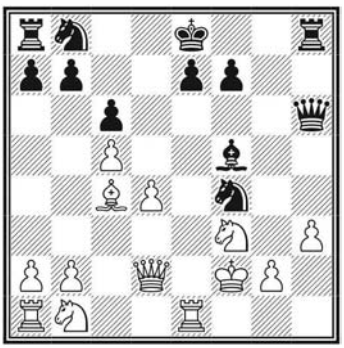
10. ♘g1-f3 h6xg5

11. ♗c1xg5 ...

After 11.♗c4 g4 12.♖e1 ♕f6

13.♗xd5 gf 14.♕xf3 ♗g7 the material and the position are equal.

11.	**...**	**♗f8-h6**
12.	**♗f1-b5+!**	**c7-c6**
13.	**♖h1-e1**	**♕e6-g4**
14.	**h2-h3**	**♕g4-h5**
15.	**♗g5xh6**	**♕h5xh6**
16.	**♗b5-c4**	**♘d5-f4**
17.	**♕d1-d2**	**♗c8-f5**



If 18.♖e5 e6 19.♘c3 ♘d7 20.♖xf5 ef 21.♖e1+ ♔f8 22.♕e3 ♘g6 23.♕xh6+ ♖xh6 24.♘g5 ♘h8 25.♗d3 (Zvara – Chetverik, Olomouc 2007) White gains a second pawn for the exchange, but he has no advantage. If 18.♘c3 ♖g8 19.♖g1 ♘d7 20.♘e2 ♘d3+ 21.♗xd3 ♕xd2 22.♘xd2 ♗xd3 23.♖ge1 it is tougher for Black without the pawn.

Game 34

M.Anderton – S.Loeffler

London 2009

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**f2-f4**	**g7-g5**
6.	**♘b1-c3**	**♗f8-g7**

Caution! The cost of each of Black's moves in the Planinc Gambit is particularly high! The slightest inaccuracy will lead to unsurmountable obstacles. If 6...gf?! 7.♗xf4 ♗g7 8.c5 ♘6d7 9.♕g4! the black king will face a calamity in the center, and, probably, it would be better to give up a pawn after 7...de 8.♗xe5 ♖g8 9.♕h5.

7. ♘g1-f3 ...



7. ... g5xf4

The d1-h5 diagonal is closed, so the swap is now acceptable. Cuban super-GM Dominguez (against Tung, San Sebastian 2011) began with the pin: 7...♗g4 8.♗e2 gf 9.♗xf4 ♘c6 10.0-0 de 11.♗xe5 ♘xe5 12.♘xe5 ♗xe2 13.♘xe2 ♗xe5 14.de ♕xd1 15.♖axd1 e6 16.♖d4 ♘d7 17.♖e4 ♖d8 18.♘c3 ♖g8. The simplifications ensure equality for Black, while if 15...♘xc4 16.♖c1 ♘e3 17.♖f3 ♘d5 White

is forced to seek compensation for the pawn. If 10.ed cd we arrive at the position from the Exchange System with White's f2 and Black's g6 pawns. This modification adds lots of tactical possibilities to the position, for example 11.♗e3 ♗xf3 12.gf (Georgescu – Chetverik, Eger 2005) 12...e5!? 13.de?! ♘xc4!

8. ♗c1xf4 ♗c8-g4
9. ♕d1-e2 ...

Timothy Taylor recommends 9.c5 with the following continuation as being to White's advantage: 9...de 10.de ♘6d7 11.h3 ♗h5 12.g4 ♗g6 13.♕a4 0-0 14.0-0-0 ♕e8 15.♕d4. **But the structure of the Planinc Gambit means that Black is in no rush to castle short.** If 13...c6 14.0-0-0 ♕c8 15.♕d4 b6 16.cb ab the position of the white king is slightly worrying.

9. ... ♘b8-c6
10. 0-0-0 d6xe5

One more useful move without taking is 10...♕d7 with the idea of ♕d7-f5. We find a similar diversion against the f4 bishop in more traditional lines of this opening.

11. d4xe5 ♕d8-c8
12. ♕e2-e3 ♗g4xf3
13. g2xf3 ♕c8-e6

The German master doesn't get to the f5 square, so that he isn't threatened by ♗e2-d3. Now, Anderton keeps some of his advantage by exchanging knights: 14.♘b5 ♖c8 15.♘d4 ♘xd4 16.♕xd4 (16...♗h6 17.♗xh6 ♕xh6+ 18.f4 c5 19.♕e4 ♕c6 20.♗d3 ♕xe4 21.♗xe4). After the move played Black completes his development and gains equal chances.

14. c4-c5 ♘b6-d7
15. ♘c3-d5 0-0-0
16. ♗f1-c4 ♔c8-b8
17. ♘d5-b6 ♕e6-f5
18. ♘b6xd7+ ♖d8xd7
19. ♖d1xd7 ♕f5xd7
20. ♖h1-g1 ♖h8-d8
21. ♗c4-b3 ♗g7-h8

Apart from the obvious retreat Loeffler could have invaded the enemy camp with 21...♕h3!? (22.♖xg7?? ♕f1+ 23.♔c2 ♘b4+ winning the queen) and 21...♘d4!? (22.♖xg7 ♘f5 23.♕g1 ♘xg7 24.♕xg7 ♕h3 with counterplay). An exciting struggle could have ensued, but it didn't.

22. ♖g1-d1 ♕d7-e8
23. ♖d1xd8+ ♘c6xd8
24. ♕e3-d3 ♘d8-c6
25. ♕d3xh7 ♘c6xe5
26. ♗f4xe5
½ - ½

The Planinc Gambit is dubious. However, it forces White to play concrete moves straight away and if he has not prepared adequately then it is hard to work out what to do in the resulting irrational positions. So we should keep the gambit as a surprise weapon while following other paths.

Chapter 33. 5...g6

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**f2-f4**	**g7-g6**



Despite Reti's win against Opocensky in the original game (Marienbad 1925), the bishop fianchetto has not been adopted much in practice. After the successes of leading German chess players, Lothar Schmid and Klaus Darga, 5...g6 appeared once again on the boards of the chess scene in games where Black had nothing to fear. The point is that the fianchetto here is illogical – the bishop will aim at a pawn that has just been overprotected.

6. ♘b1-c3 ...

There is nothing to be gained from waiting before developing the queen's knight. In the game Khakimov against Kosikov (Kiev 2004) the partial opening of the long diagonal was probably to Black's advantage: 6.♘f3 ♗g7 7.♗e2 0-0 8.0-0 ♗e6 9.b3 c5 10.dc (or 10.d5 ♗f5 11.♗b2 ♘8d7 12.♕c1 ♕b8 13.ed ♗xb2 14.♕xb2 ♕xd6 with equality) 10...de 11.♗b2 ♘6d7 12.♘xe5 ♘xc5 13.♘c3 ♘bd7 14.♘d5 ♘xe5 15.♗xe5 ♗xd5 16.cd ♘d7 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 18.♕d4+ ♘f6 19.♖fd1 ♕d6 20.♖ac1 a6 21.♕e5 ♖ac8. In the resulting structure the bishop gives way to the knight and White has to fight for equality.

6. ... d6xe5

As Bagirov correctly pointed out, the planned exchange on e5 needs to happen before taking with the d-pawn becomes better for White. If 6...♗g7 7.♗e3 0-0 8.♘f3 de 9.de! Black can expect a difficult future with a useless knight on b6 and his dark-squared bishop locked firmly away. Variations without exchanging on e5 are analyzed in Game 35.

7. f4xe5 ♗f8-g7

7...c5 8.d5 ♗g7 is analyzed via the move order 6...c5 7.d5 g6 8.♘c3 ♗g7 (Chapter 35).

8. ♗c1-e3 ...

8.c5 is also good, as Black cannot fully control d5. A possible continuation is 8...♘d5 9.♗c4 ♘xc3 10.bc 0-0 11.♘f3 ♘c6 12.0-0 ♘a5 13.♗d3 b6 14.♗a3 ♗e6 15.♕e2 ♕d7 16.♘g5 (Suetin – Ledger, Hastings 1990) 16...♗d5

17.♖ab1 ♗h6 18.♘e4 ♖ab8 with probable equality.

Black would meet 8.♘f3 by castling and transposing to the main line (if 9.♗e3) or to the 8.c5 line (if 9.c5). 8...♗g4?! is weaker due to 9.c5 ♘d5 10.♗c4 ♘xc3?! (the comparatively better 10...e6 11.♗xd5 ed 12.0-0 is unattractive from the positional point of view) 11.♗xf7+! ♔xf7 12.♘g5+ ♔e8 13.♕xg4, threatening not only 14.bc, but also 14.♘xh7!

8. ... 0-0

The negative effects of developing the bishop were seen back in a simultaneous game between Emanuel Lasker and S.Bernstein (New York 1928): 8...c5 9.dc ♘6d7 10.e6?! fe 11.♘f3 ♕a5 12.♖c1 ♘xc5 13.♗d4 e5! 14.♘xe5?!, and the amateur's cold-blooded castling forced the great simultaneous player to worry about the safety of his own king. 10.b4 is preferable, with a quite unclear position after 10... ♗xe5 11.♕b3 a5 12.b5 a4 13.♕b4 ♘f6.

9. ♘g1-f3 c7-c5

Albeit with slightly less impact, this attack on the center is also worthy of recommendation in this position. The pinning move 9...♗g4?! allowed Hynes versus Habershon (England 2008) to organize a rapid storm with opposite-side castling with: 10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♗xf3 ♘c6 12.0-0-0 a5 13.h4 f6? 14.e6 f5, and 15.h5! practically wins here.

10. d4xc5 ...

In reply to 10.d5?! Velicka skillfully demonstrated the advantages of his position (in a game with Nun, Czech Republic 1993): 10...♗g4 11.♗xc5 ♘8d7 12.♗d4 ♘xe5 13.♗e2 ♗xf3 14.gf e6 15.0-0 ♖c8 16.b3 ed 17.f4 ♘c6 18.♗xg7 ♔xg7 19.♘xd5 ♘xd5 20.cd ♕b6+ 21.♔h1 ♘d4 and the knight has a marked advantage over the bishop.

10. ... ♘b6-d7

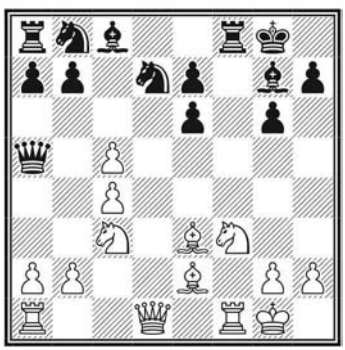
11. e5-e6 ...

It's pointless to try to hold on to the material: 11.♕d5?! ♘c6 12.e6 fe 13.♕xe6+ ♔h8 14.♕e4 ♗xc3+ 15.bc ♕a5, and because 16.♗d4+? can be met with 16...e5! Black has gained the initiative.

11. ... f7xe6

12. ♗f1-e2 ♕d8-a5

13. 0-0 ...



This position is important for assessing the variation with the fianchetto. Accepting the sacrifice after 13...♗xc3 14.bc ♕xc3 15.♗d4 ♕a5 16.♘g5 ♘f6 (Lacasa – Narciso Dublan, Barcelona 1994)

17.♗xf6! ♖xf6 18.♕d4 threatens Black's kingside with disaster. More reliable is 13...♘c6, combining development and control of the central squares.

Game 35

I.Denisov – A.Khalifman

Aix les Bains 2011

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
4.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
5.	**f2-f4**	**g7-g6**
6.	**♘b1-c3**	**♗f8-g7**
7.	**♗c1-e3**	**...**



7. ... ♗c8-e6!?

This idea belongs to Vladimir Sergeev. In the position on the diagram he played it against Kotek (Czech Republic 1997), while after 7...0-0 8.♘f3 he played it against Ivanchuk (Kiev 1984). It takes aim at the c4 pawn, whose defense is problematic, while the advance d4-d5 only renders the diversion against the center easier.

After 7...0-0 8.♘f3 the queen's bishop should avoid pinning with 8...♗g4?! in view of 9.h3 ♗xf3 10.♕xf3 de 11.de ♘c6 12.♖d1 ♕c8 13.c5 ♘d7 14.♗b5 ♘db8 15.♕e4 f6 16.♗c4+ ♔h8 17.h4! fe 18.h5! (Prie – Dearing, England 2008) White developed a crushing attack on the basis of a clear strategic advantage.

The move order in the annotated game is more precise. 8.c5!? places a question-mark against castling. A possible continuation is 8... ♘6d7 9.♗c4 b6 10.♕f3 c6 11.cd ed 12.h4 b5 (Sengupta – Neelotpal, Kolkata 2012) 13.♗xb5! ♕b6 14.h5! containing a tactical trick 14...cb 15.h6! ♗h8? 16.♕xa8! ♗b7 17.♘d5! – the unexpected mate threat throws a spanner in the works of the queen trap. The rook's pawn can also jump into battle a bit earlier: 9.h4!? e6? 10.cd cd 11.h5 ♘c6 12.hg fg 13.d5! with a crushing position (Bauer – Hug, Switzerland 2001).

8. d4-d5 ...

The old analysis by Vladimir Sergeev, 8.♘f3 ♘xc4(?!) 9.♗xc4 ♗xc4 10.♕a4+ b5 11.♘xb5 ♗xb5 12.♕xb5+ ♘d7 (with equality), has failed to drum up enthusiasm among practitioners. And it's no surprise, as 13.e6 fe 14.♘g5 c6 15.♕xc6 ♕a5+ 16.♔f2 ♕d5 17.♖ac1 with the threat of mate forces an exchange of queens on somewhat unfavourable terms for Black.

Some people are surprised at

the popularity of the continuation 8.♘f3 0-0 9.b3?!, which was condemned even by Bagirov due to 9...c5 10.dc ♘6d7 11.cd ed 12.♕xd6 ♘xe5! White is not that bad here, but after 13.♕xd8 ♘xf3+ 14.gf ♖xd8 15.♖c1 ♘c6 16.♔f2 ♘d4 17.♗e2 ♘f5 18.♖hd1 ♖e8 Gipslis, a widely recognized Alekhine Defense expert, had to fight for a draw against Li Wenliang despite being a clearly better player (Luzern 1993). The situation was repeated at the Olympiad at Tromso (2014) in the game between Grandmaster Bologan and Lebanese master Khairallah.

If 8.♘f3 0-0 9.♕b3 Black needs to skillfully neutralize the ♘f3-g5 sortie. The continuation 9...a5 10.♘g5 ♗f5?! 11.c5 a4 12.♕d1 dc 13.dc ♕xd1+ 14.♖xd1 ♘c8 15.♗c4 (Simon – Degraeve, Lille 2011) isn't promising for Black, although there is nothing wrong with the queen exchange via 10...a4 11.♘xe6 ab 12.♘xd8 ♖xd8.

Another plan is to batter the enemy center with the c-pawn: 9...♘a6 10.♘g5 c5 11.dc ♘xc5 12.♗xc5 dc 13.♖d1 ♕c8 with a good position (J.-N. Riff – V.Sergeev, Sautron 2012). Against Willemsma (Liechtenstein 2014) Sergeev varied his play: 10.h3 ♖b8 11.♗e2 d5 12.♘g5?! dc 13.♘xe6 cb 14.♘xd8 ♘b4 15.♔f2 ♖fxd8 16.ab a6 17.♗c4 c6 18.♔f3 ♘6d5, and White has a strategically difficult position. After 15.♘xb7!? ♘c2+ 16.♔d2 ♖xb7 17.♖ac1 ♖d8 18.ab ♘xd4 19.♗xd4 ♖xd4+ 20.♔e3 ♖b4 White can probably achieve a draw, but 12.c5 ♘c4 13.♗c1 c6 14.♕d1 is clearly better for White due to b2-b3. Therefore, 10...♖b8 is best replaced with 10...c5!?

8. ... ♗e6-c8

Khalifman believes that it is easier to undermine the center with the bishop on its starting square. 8...♗f5 is no worse. After 9.c5 dc 10.♗xc5 c6 11.d6 ed 12.♗xd6 ♘8d7, and Black swaps the threatening bishop on d6 via the f8 square with a relatively strong position. In the interesting variation 9.e6!? fe 10.g4 ♗xc3+ 11.bc ♗e4 12.♕d4 ed! 13.♕xh8+ ♔d7 14.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 15.c5 ♗xh1 16.cb ab the three pawns are no worse than the piece.

9. ♘g1-f3 ...

9.c5 dc 10.♗xc5 can be met by undermining the center with 10... f6!? (which is no good with the bishop on f5 due to e5-e6).

9. ... 0-0

Undermining the center with 9...c6, which was played in the game Petr – V.Sergeev (Czech Republic 2006), is dubious in view of 10.dc bc 11.c5! dc 12.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 13.♗xc5. The queen's bishop's second sortie only serves to strengthen the enemy's advantage in the center – 9...♗g4 10.c5! dc (10...♘6d7?! 11.♕b3) 11.♗xc5 0-0 12.♗e2.

10. ♗f1-d3 e7-e6

11. 0-0 ♘**b8-a6**

The continuation 11...ed 12.cd de 13.fe ♘xd5 14.♘xd5 ♕xd5 15.♕c2 ♘c6 appears risky for Black, although Houdini doesn't see anything wrong with it.

12. ♗d3-e2 **e6xd5**
13. c4xd5 ♗**c8-g4**
14. ♗e3-d4 ♘**a6-b4**

Black needs to activate one of his 'bad' knights without giving up prospects for the other one. Choosing 14...♗xf3 15.♗xf3 ♘c4, he should have seen that after 16.♖e1 de 17.fe c5 18.dc ♘xb2 19.♕d2 he can play the unobvious 19...♗h6! (20.♕xh6 ♕xd4+ 21.♕e3 ♕xe3+ 22.♖xe3 bc with equality).

15. ♕d1-b3 **c7-c5**
16. d5xc6 ♘**b4xc6**
17. ♗d4xb6 **...**

Faced with an opponent who has a significantly higher rating, Denisov plays somewhat overoptimistically. 17.♖ad1 ♗e6 18.♕a3 was probably objectively stronger.

17. ... ♕**d8xb6+**
18. ♕b3xb6 **a7xb6**
19. e5xd6 ♖**f8-d8**
20. ♖f1-d1 ♗**g7-f8**
21. h2-h3 **...**

White cannot hold on to the extra pawn (21.♘e4 ♗g7 22.♖d2 ♖a4) and a draw becomes inevitable.

21. ... ♗**g4xf3**
22. ♗e2xf3 ♗**f8xd6**
23. g2-g3 ♗**d6-c5+**
24. ♔g1-g2 ♗**c5-d4**
25. a2-a3 ♗**d4xc3**
26. b2xc3 ♔**g8-f8**
27. ♔g2-f2 ♖**d8xd1**
28. ♗f3xd1 ♖**a8-d8**
29. ♗d1-e2 ♘**c6-a5**
½ - ½

Overall, White's chances are somewhat better, but the resource ♗c8-e6 is noteworthy. Analysis demonstrates that this provocation is better than it appears at first glance.

Chapter 34. 5...♗f5

1. e2-e4 ♘**g8-f6**
2. e4-e5 ♘**f6-d5**
3. d2-d4 **d7-d6**
4. c2-c4 ♘**d5-b6**
5. f2-f4 ♗**c8-f5**

Diagram



In this chapter we have combined the 5...♗f5 and 5...de 6.fe ♗f5 lines without the early development of the knight on c6.

6. ♘b1-c3 ...

There is no rush to exchange the light-squared bishops: 6.♗d3 ♗xd3 7.♕xd3 de 8.fe c5 9.♘f3 e6 10. 0-0 ♘c6 11.♘c3 cd 12.♘e4 ♘d7 13.♗f4 ♕b6 or 10.♕e4 ♘c6 11.dc ♘a4 (here, at least, the quantity of pawns will be equal). It's better if White plays 9.d5!? e6 10.♘f3 ed 11.♘c3 ♘xc4 12.♗g5 ♕d7 13.0-0-0 with compensation for the pawn.

6. ... d6xe5

The continuation 6...e6 with standard kingside development and without the exchange in the center is seen in Game 36, while the continuation with the idea of ♘b8-a6 and c7-c5 (the Trifunovic variation) is seen in Game 37.

7. f4xe5 e7-e6

8. ♘g1-f3 ...

After 8.♗e3 it is nearly always necessary to follow with 9.♘f3. The poor continuation 8.♗e3 ♗b4 9.♗e2?! ♕h4+ 10.♗f2 ♕e4 demonstrates that it's not advisable to invite the queen in for tea.

8. ... ♗f8-b4

According to Bagirov's monograph, the idea of developing the bishop to e7 followed by f7-f6 without the knight on c6 "was seen in a game by Grandmaster Geller back in 1960 and, after further practical tests, has achieved acceptance". It is unfortunate that for censorship reasons the name of the inventor of this line – Victor Korchnoi – is not mentioned. Korchnoi gained the upper hand in that unusually bloody battle: 8... ♗e7 9.♗e2 0-0 10.0-0 f6 11.♗f4?! ♘c6 12.ef ♗xf6 13.d5 ♘a5 14.♘e5 ♗xe5 (if 14...♕e7!? 15.g4! ♗xe5 16.♗xe5 ed 17.♗g3! and equality is restored) 15.♗xe5 ♘axc4 16.♗xc4 ♘xc4 17.♗xg7! ♘e3 18.♕e2 ♘xf1 19.♗xf8 ♘xh2! 20.♗c5 ♘g4 21.de ♕h4 22.e7 ♕h2+ 23.♔f1 ♕f4+ 24.♔g1 ♖e8 25.♕f3 ♕h2+ 26.♔f1 ♕h5. The dynamic equality that should have arisen was lost due to Geller's serious mistakes.

The placing of the bishop on e3 was more accurate. Then, 11...♘c6 returns the players to better known paths. If 11...fe 12.♘xe5 ♘8d7 then a fragment from the game Cherkasov – Skrzypnik (Koszalin 1999) is of theoretical value: 13.c5! ♘d5 14.♘xd5 ed 15.♗g4 ♗xg4 16.♕xg4 ♘xe5 17.de d4?! 18.♗h6 ♖xf1+ 19.♖xf1 ♗f8 20.e6, and the rook invasion on f7 quickly broke Black's resistance. If Black plays the better move 17...c6 then the immediate ♗e3-h6 is impossible due to the capture on c5 with check, but the advantage can be retained with 18.♖xf8+ ♗xf8 19.♖f1 and e5-e6.

After 9.♗d3 ♗g4 10.0-0 ♘c6 11.c5 ♘d5 12.♗e4 ♕d7 13.a3 ♘xc3 14.bc 0-0 15.♕d3 ♗f5 (Kabir – Mohota, Dhaka 2002), Black offers to double pawns and in so doing ensures the safety of his king. In a blitz game versus Morozevich (Beijing 2012) Nakamura completely rejected castling short,

yet coped smartly with the strategic problems: 10.♗e4 ♘c6 11.c5 ♘d5 12.0-0 ♕d7 13.♘xd5 ed 14.♗c2 b6 15.cb ab 16.a3 (16.♗a4!?) 16...♗h5 17.♔h1 ♘d8 18.♗e3 ♗g6 19.♖c1 ♘e6 20.♗xg6 hg 21.♕c2 c5 22.♕f2 c4.

Let's return to the knight pin. Black is attempting to deform his opponent's pawn structure, to win the battle for the important d5 square and then play c7-c5 to pressurize d4 (and the waiting move ♘b8-c6 becomes sensible). The theory of this line goes back to the game Hromadka – Gruenfeld (Bad Pistyan 1922).

9. ♗f1-d3 ...

It's possible for White to offer to exchange bishops here because Black's queen's knight has not managed to pressurize d4. It's harder for Black to defend against 9.♗d3 than if White plays 9.♗e3. Then, 9...c5 10.a3 ♗xc3+ 11.bc ♘c6 12.♗e2 0-0 13.0-0 ♖c8 14.♖c1 ♗g6 (Art.Minasian – Timoshenko, Podolsk 1989) forces White to worry about his pawns, without daring to think about the initiative. Even worse is 10.♕b3?! cd 11.♘xd4 ♕h4+ 12.♗f2 ♕e4+ 13.♗e2 ♘c6! 14.♘xc6 ♕xg2 15.♖g1 ♗xc3+ 16.♕xc3 ♕xc6 – the wandering queen grabs a pawn on the way. Finally, in the game Franssila – Solozhenkin (Jyvaskyla 2003) after 10.♗e2 ♘c6 11.0-0 cd 12.♘xd4 ♘xd4 13.♗xd4 ♗c2!? 14.♕d2 0-0 15.♖ac1 ♗g6 16.♕e3 ♗e7 17.♖cd1 ♗c2 18.♗xb6 ♕xb6 19.♕xb6 ab 20.♖d7 ♗c5+ 21.♔h1 ♗b4 22.♖xb7 ♗xc3 23.bc ♗e4 24.♖xb6 ♖xa2 Black neutralized his opponent's minimal advantage and even won an equal endgame.

9. ... c7-c5

Grandmaster Bauer (versus Buisson, France 2013) went for 9... ♗g4?! 10.0-0 ♘c6 and was lucky not to be countered by 11.c5 (which was played by Velimirovic in forgotten times). The continuation 9...♗xd3?! 10.♕xd3 c5 was refuted a long time ago, of which the young Nabaty reminded experienced master Zilberman (Haifa 2008): 11.0-0 cd 12.♘e4 ♘8d7 13.♗g5 ♕c7? 14.c5 ♘d5 15.♘d6+ ♔f8 16.♘xd4 ♗xc5 17.♖xf7+ ♔g8 18.♗h6! ♘xe5 19.♖xc7 ♘xd3 20.♖xg7+ ♔f8 21.♖xb7+ ♔g8 22.♖g7+ ♔f8 23.♖xa7+ – the Lord's mills mill at a moderate pace, but they mill everything to the end! He could have avoided an immediate loss with 13...♕b8, and if White plays 14.c5 then Black captures on c5 with his bishop, thereby avoiding the pin with 15.♖ac1.

10. ♗d3xf5 ...

The example Joksic – Hazai (Budapest 1975), 10.d5!? ♗xd3 11.♕xd3 ed 12.♘g5! ♘c6 13.♘xf7(?!) ♔xf7(?) 14.♕f5+ ♔e8 15.0-0 ♕e7 16.♘b5! g6 17.♕h3 ♘xe5 18.♗g5!, illustrating a very strong initiative for White, is not at all convincing. After 13...♗xc3+!

14.bc ♔xf7 15.♕f5+ ♔e8 16.0-0 ♕e7 Black exchanges the knight in time and White has no pieces left for the attack. Houdini believes that White here should force perpetual check with 13.e6! fe 14.♘xe6 ♕h4+ 15.g3 ♕xc4 16.♘xg7+ ♔e7 17.♗g5+ ♔d6 18.♗f4+.

10. ... e6xf5

Krizsany and Videki correctly highlighted in their monograph the advantages of the intermediate 10...cd! It seems that after 11.♘xd4 ef 12.♘xf5 ♕xd1+ 13.♔xd1 0-0 White cannot hold on to the extra pawn; and it's unclear how he can gain any advantage from different continuations.

11. d4-d5 ...

After 11.♗g5 ♕d7 12.0-0 0-0 (12...♘xc4 13.♘e2 h6 14.♗c1, then a2-a3 and b2-b3 chase the black pieces away) 13.d5 ♘xc4 14.♕e2 ♗xc3 15.♕xc4 ♗xb2 16.♖ab1 ♗d4+ 17.♘xd4 cd 18.e6 fe 19.de ♕c8 20.♕d5 ♕c6 (Morozevich – V.Bagirov, Moscow 1995) 21.♕b3 ♔h8 22.e7 ♖e8 23.♖xf5 ♘d7 24.♕xb7 ♖ac8 25.♕xc6 ♖xc6 26.♖d5 White regains his lost pawn with extras. Black should change the move order with 13...♗xc3 14.bc ♘xc4 15.♕d3 ♘b6 16.c4 ♖e8, and then the pawn advance e5-e6 is so far harmless.

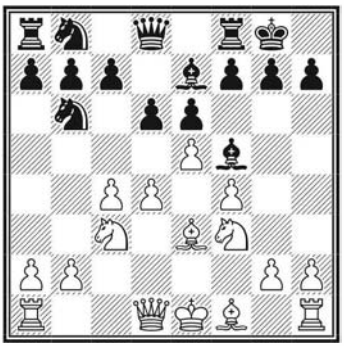
11. ... ♘b6xc4
12. 0-0 0-0
13. ♕d1-d3 ♘c4-b6



If 14.♗g5 ♕d7 15.♖ad1 c4 16.♕d2 ♖e8 17.a3 (Zhou Yang Fan – Baburin, England 2013) 17...♗xc3 18.bc ♕c8 Black holds onto the f5 pawn with a fairly good position. White should prefer here 14.♕xf5 ♗xc3 15.bc ♕d7 16.♕c2, and taking on d5 with the queen is dangerous (16...♕xd5 17.♘g5 g6 18.e6), while capturing with the knight is impossible (16...♘xd5? 17.♘g5 g6 18.♘e4). Advantage to White.

Game 36
V.Kotronias – A.Baburin
Calvia 2004

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
5. f2-f4 ♗c8-f5
6. ♘b1-c3 e7-e6
7. ♘g1-f3 ♗f8-e7
8. ♗c1-e3 0-0



9. ♗f1-d3! ...

White attempts to exchange his opponent's most active piece, for which he is prepared to reduce his defense of d4. It's useful to compare the positions that arise after 9.♗d3 de 10.♘xe5!? and 9.♗e2 de 10.♘xe5!? It appears that only the position with the active bishop is better for White.

9. ... d6-d5

9...♗xd3 10.♕xd3 d5 11.b3 dc 12.bc ♘c6 13.♘e4 is safer, and, instead of undermining the center with 13...f6?! (Kulaots – Piasetski, Gibraltar 2012) Black can manoeuvre patiently on the three rows.

10. ♗d3xf5 ...

10.b3 dc 11.bc ♗b4 12.♖c1 c5 13.0-0 cd 14.♘xd4 ♗xd3 15.♕xd3 ♘8d7 (Dominguez – Nogueiras, Merida 2007) 16.♘e4!? ♘c5 17.♕b1 ♘xe4 18.♕xb4 is good for White here. 12...♗xd3 13.♕xd3 h6 14.0-0 ♕d7 is more flexible, either followed by a move undermining the center, or else piece pressure on d4, depending on White's moves.

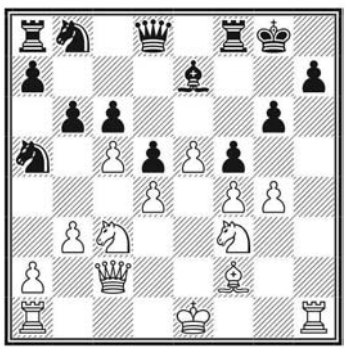
10. ... e6xf5
11. c4-c5 ♘b6-c4
12. ♗e3-f2 c7-c6

An earlier game here Stein – Mikenas (Yerevan 1962) is of no theoretical interest: 12...♘xb2?? 13.♕b1 ♘c4 14.♕xb7 c6 15.♕xa8 ♕c7 16.0-0 ♘a6 17.♘xd5, and it's time for Black to resign. Kotronias recommends defending an unpleasant position after 12...b6 13.b3 ♘a5 14.0-0 ♘bc6 15.a3 ♖b8 16.cb ab 17.♕c2, whereas he places a question-mark against the move in the text (which is disputable).

13. b2-b3 ♘c4-a5
14. ♕d1-c2 g7-g6
15. h2-h3 b7-b6
16. g2-g4 f5xg4?

The continuation 16...bc 17.dc ♘b7 holds back the storming of the king's retreat. At the very least, if 18.gf ♗xc5 19.♖g1 ♗xf2+ 20.♔xf2 ♔h8 no mate is threatened.

17. h3xg4 f7-f5



18. ♗f2-h4!! ...

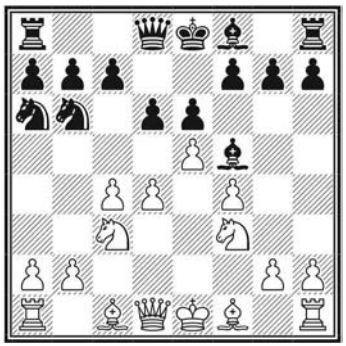
A brilliant move! Exchanging the bishops followed by the knight invasion of g5 required bravery and precise calculations from Kotronias, as the white king gets entangled in the legs of his own pieces. The winner provided pretty and exact variations in Chess Informant: 18... fg 19.♗xe7 ♕xe7 20.♘g5 ♖xf4 21.♘xh7! ♖f5 22.♘f6+! ♖xf6 23.♕h2 or 21...♘d7 22.♕xg6+ ♕g7 23.♕e6+ ♕f7 (23...♖f7 24.♖h4) 24.♕h6!

18. ... b6xc5
19. ♗g5xe7 ♕d8xe7
20. ♘f3-g5 c5xd4
21. ♖h1xh7 ♕e7-b4
22. ♔e1-e2
1-0

If 22...d3+ 23.♕xd3 ♕xf4 then 24.♖h8+! is decisive. Note that 22.♖h6 and 22.0-0-0 dc 23.♔b1! is just as strong. The knight on b8 (and, therefore, the queen's rook) stood motionless until the very end.

Game 37
G.Jones – A.Baburin
Bunratty 2011

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
5. f2-f4 ♗c8-f5
6. ♘g1-f3 e7-e6
7. ♘b1-c3 ♘b8-a6



8. ♗f1-d3 ...

This was not the first time that the naturalized Irish Grandmaster had played the Trifunovic variation. In the game Aoustin – Baburin (Bunratty 2008) after 8.♗e3 c5 9.♗e2 ♗e7 10.0-0 0-0 11.♖c1 de 12.de ♘b4 13.♕b3 a5 14.♖fd1 ♕e8 15.♖d2 a4 16.♕d1 Alexander rejected the logical 16...♖d8, so as not to diminish his chances of beating an opponent of the level of a candidate master through superfluous exchanges.

8. ... ♗f5xd3
9. ♕d1xd3 c7-c5
10. d4-d5!? ...

Gawain Jones had clearly planned this advance at home. Eames versus Baburin (England 2006) maintained tension in the center: 10.♗e3 ♘b4 11.♕e2 de 12.fe cd 13.♗xd4 ♘c6 14.♗f2 ♗b4 15.0-0 ♗xc3 16.bc ♘d7 with double-edged chances. But, avoiding doubling pawns with 14.0-0-0 ♘d7 15.♘e4 ♗e7 16.♗c3, White retained an opening advantage.

In the game Djurhuus – Agdestein (Norway 2000) Black grabbed the initiative with an exchange sacrifice – 10.dc ♘xc5 11.♕e2 de 12.♘xe5 f6! 13.♕h5+ g6 14.♘xg6 hg 15.♕xh8 ♕d4 16.♔e2 ♕xc4+ 17.♔f3 ♘d5. The continuation 13.♘f3 ♘d3+ 14.♔f1 ♕d7 15.b3 ♖d8 16.♗e3 can be considered a path to consolidation, but it only partially rehabilitates the exchange on c5.

10. ... e6xd5

Or 10...de 11.♕e4! f5 12.♕xe5 ♘xc4 13.♕e2 ♘d6 14.♘g5 winning back the pawn and threatening the black king.

11. c4xd5 ♗f8-e7

12. 0-0 0-0

12...c4 was probably more accurate, and instead of the prestigious e4 square the more modest e2 awaits the queen. If 13.♕e2 0-0 14.e6 ♘c7 both central pawns become targets.

13. ♕d3-e4 ♘a6-c7

14. ♖f1-d1 ♕d8-e8

If Black was too timid to try undermining White's center with f7-f6, then he should have swung his major pieces along his back rank in the other direction (14...♖e8!?).

15. f4-f5 ♔g8-h8

16. ♗c1-f4 ♖a8-d8?

Should Baburin have retreated the queen back to d8, White would have still needed to choose the right key to open the lock to Black's fortress. Now, however, a standard pawn push is decisive.



17. f5-f6! g7xf6

18. e5xd6 ♗e7xd6

19. ♕e4-f5 ♗d6xf4

20. ♕f5xf6+ ♔h8-g8

21. ♕f6xf4 ...

Material is equal, and it's Black's move, but he cannot come up with anything now. White still has his ace up his sleeve – the ♘f3-h4-f5 manoeuvre.

21. ... ♕e8-d7

22. ♘f3-e5 ♕d7-e7

23. d5-d6!

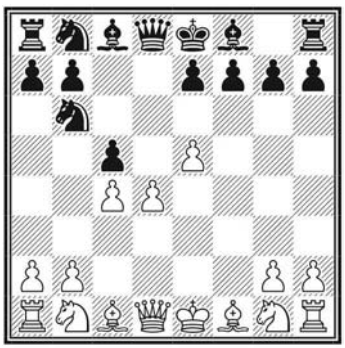
1-0

After 23...♖xd6 24.♖xd6 ♕xd6 25.♕g3+ the discovered check captures the queen.

It seems that Black should follow Korchnoi's example and take the opportunity to switch to the usual tabiya variations. The Trifunovic variation objectively fails to accord Black equal chances.

Chapter 35. 6...c5 7.d5 g6

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**f2-f4**	**d6xe5**
6.	**f4xe5**	**c7-c5**



According to the database, this move to undermine the center was first seen in the game Khavin versus Tolush (Moscow 1945): 7.dc?! ♕xd1+ 8.♔xd1 ♘6d7 (8...♘a4! 9.♘a3 a6 10.b3 ♘xc5 is 'purer') 9.e6!? fe 10.♗e3 ♘a6 11.♘c3 ♘dxc5 12.♘f3 b6 13.a3 ♘d7 14.b4 ♗b7 15.♔c2 e5 16.♗d3 g6 17.♖ad1 ♗g7 with better chances. In reply to 7.d5 Tolush clearly planned 7... e6 (Chapter 36), rather than the kingside fianchetto, which only became fashionable in our times.

7. d4-d5 ...

After 7.♘f3 cd it's the right time for White to swap queens. Then, he may count on his opponent being greedy: 8.♕xd4 ♕xd4 9.♘xd4 ♘c6 10.♘b5 ♔d8 11.♘1c3 ♘xe5?! 12.♗f4 ♘bd7 13.0-0-0 f6 (Velimirovic – V.Bagirov, Palma de Mallorca 1980) 14.♗xe5 fe 15.♘e4 a6 16.♘g5! winning a rook for the knight (while in the case of 16...ab he wins the queen's rook rather than the king's rook!). After 11...♗e6 12.b3 a6 13.♗e3 ♘d7 14.♘d4 ♘xd4 15.♗xd4 ♗f5 16.g4!? ♗xg4 17.♗g2 ♖b8 18.0-0 f6 19.h3 ♗e6 20.♖ad1 (Pavlovic – Laketic, Niksic 1997) the initiative and the pawn counterweighted each other. Note also that 15...g6 and 16... ♗g7 would remind White that he has a weak pawn on e5.

7. ... g7-g6

It's odd that until the 1980s nobody thought of a fianchetto faced with this move order. The e-pawn is no longer defended by its neighbors and it seems a waste not to attack it with the bishop.

8. ♘b1-c3 ...

In the game Ardelean – F.Grunberg (Timisoara 1995) the knight was deployed to d2 later: 8.♗d3 ♗g7 9.♕e2 0-0 10.♘f3 ♗g4 11.♗f4 ♘8d7 12.♘bd2 e6 13.d6 f6 14.ef? ♕xf6 15.♗g5 ♕xb2 – and White has nothing for the pawn. He could maintain equality in this complicated struggle with 14.0-0 ♘xe5 15.♗xe5 fe 16.♘e4 ♘d7. It's interesting that d5 is undefended and White has had to change his structure.

8. ... ♗f8-g7
9. ♗c1-f4 0-0
10. ♘g1-f3 ...

More often 10.♕d2 is played here (Game 38). The traditional drawback of 10.♗d3 is that it shuts a precious file. Further, the game could continue 10...e6 11.d6 ♘c6 12.♘f3 ♘d7 13.♗e2 f6 14.ef ♘xf6 15.0-0-0 (Piscopo – R.Hoffmann, Cappelle-la-Grande 2014) 15... ♘d4!? 16.♘xd4 cd 17.♘b5 ♘e8 18.g3 ♗d7 with very complicated play.

The prophylactic move 10.h3 proved to be justified after 10...e6 11.♘f3 ed 12.cd ♘8d7 13.♗b5 a6 14.♗xd7 ♘xd7 15.0-0 c4 16.♕e2 ♘b6 17.♗g5 f6 18.ef ♗xf6 19.♗xf6 ♖xf6 20.♘d4 ♗f5 21.♘xf5 gf 22.♕d2 (Novak – Havas, Pula 2000). Having uncovered the kingside, Black liquidates the pair of pawns but the remaining passed pawn is a serious threat. 11...f6 is stronger, exploiting the slowing in the mobilization of White's forces.

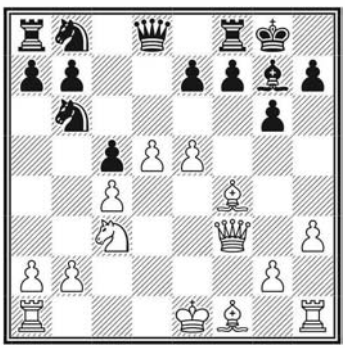
10. ... ♗c8-g4

There are various setups that can be applied in reply to 10...e6 11.d6 ♘c6, for example 12.♗d3 ♘d7 13.♕e2 or 12.♕d2(d3) ♘d7 13.♘f3, and switching the queen to e3 leads to Game 38. The pin move looks more accurate.

11. h2-h3 ...

11.♕e2?! e6 12.0-0-0 ed 13.♘xd5 ♘xd5 14.♖xd5 ♕a5 15.a3 ♗e6 16.♖d2 ♘c6 17.♕e3 ♖fd8 is clearly weaker (Yu.Vovk – Khworostinin, Alushta 2007). The white king is exposed and he has no play.

11. ... ♗g4xf3
12. ♕d1xf3 ...



Black is fine here and he has a pleasant choice ahead of him. One variation is 12...e6 13.0-0-0 ed 14.cd c4 15.♕e4 ♖e8 and both of White's central pawns are under attack, while in the game Moraru – M.Grunberg (Romania 1994) the pawn on e5 was immediately chosen as the target: 12...♘8d7 13.♕e3?! (13.♕e4!?) 13...♕b8 14.e6 ♘e5 15.0-0-0? (15.g3 was more stubborn) 15...♘exc4 16.♕e4 ♘d6 17.♕e1 ♕c8 18.♗xd6 ed 19.e7 ♖e8 20.♗b5 ♕f5, and bringing the bishop to the c1-h6 diagonal will be murderous.

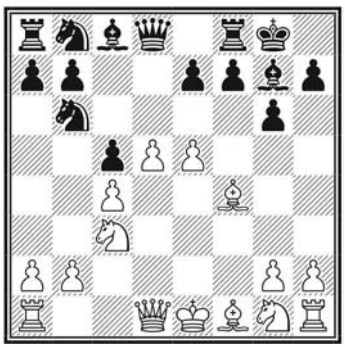
Game 38
A.Finkel – M.Grunberg
Jerusalem 2013

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6

Romanian International Master

Mihai Lucian Grunberg and his slightly weaker brother Florin inherited a love of the Alekhine Defense from their father, International Master Sergiu Henric. It is worth carefully analyzing the games of the Grunberg family – after all, they sometimes had to reveal family secrets about this opening in their games.

2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
5. f2-f4 d6xe5
6. f4xe5 c7-c5
7. d4-d5 g7-g6
8. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-g7
9. ♗c1-f4 0-0



10. ♕d1-d2 ...

He plans to castle long while at the same time setting up a battery on the dark squares.

10. ... e7-e6
11. d5-d6 ...

In reply to 11.0-0-0 ed 12.cd Black should hold back from developing his bishop, as it won't find a safe haven: 12...♗g4 13.♖e1 c4 14.h3 ♗f5 15.g4 ♗d3 16.♗xd3 cd 17.♕xd3 ♘a6 18.d6 ♖c8 19.♔b1 ♘b4 20.♕d1 ♘c4 21.♖h2 ♕a5 (Movsesian – Z.Varga, Czech Republic 2005). Counterplay against the white king isn't sufficient, as the pawn duet prevents Black from adding reinforcements. Black should siege the d5 pawn and undermine the one on e5 – 12...♖e8 13.♖e1 ♘a6 14.♘f3 ♘b4 15.♗g5 f6 16.♗h4 ♗f5 (Smith – Shabalov, Philadelphia 2007) 17.d6 ♕d7 18.ef ♖xe1+ 19.♕xe1 ♗f8 with a very unclear position.

11. ... ♘b8-c6

He needs to tie his enemy to the defense of the e5 pawn. Undermining the center doesn't fit here: 11...f6?! 12.♘f3 fe 13.♗g5 ♕d7 14.♘e4 ♕c6 15.♕c2 ♗d7 16.0-0-0 ♕c8 17.h4 ♘c6 18.h5 h6? 19.♘f6+ ♖xf6 20.♗xf6 ♗xf6 21.♕xg6+ ♗g7 22.♗d3 with an irresistible attack (Vyskocil – Loeffler, Austria 2008) 18...♗e8 saves the king from difficulties, but is insufficient to fix the strategic defects in his position.

12. ♘g1-f3 ♘b6-d7
13. ♕d2-e3 ...

If 13.0-0-0 ♘cxe5 14.♘xe5 ♗xe5 15.♗xe5 ♘xe5 16.♕e3 Black returns the pawn while successfully completing his development: 16...♘g4 17.♕xc5 b6 18.♕d4 ♕g5+ 19.♕d2 ♕xd2+ 20.♖xd2 ♗b7 21.♗d3 ♘e5 22.♖hd1 ♘xd3+ 23.♖xd3 ♗xg2 (Migot – V.Sergeev, Pardubice 2013). The passed pawn

is relatively harmless and the position is about equal. The more complicated 18...e5 19.♕d2 ♗b7 also speaks in favour of 13.♕e3!?

13. ... ♘c6-d4

The centralizing of the knight and the undermining of the pawns both have to be played somehow or other, but in which order? After 13...f6 14.ef ♕xf6 15.♗g5 ♕f7 16. 0-0-0 ♘d4 17.♘xd4 cd 18.♖xd4!? ♗xd4 19.♕xd4 ♕f2 20.♕xf2 ♖xf2 21.♗e3 ♖f6 22.c5 (Hess – Mandt, Germany 2012) White gets the bishop pair and a protected passed pawn for the exchange, but the blocked nature of the position makes it doubtful that White has any advantage.

14. 0-0-0 f7-f6
15. h2-h4 ...

White also has difficultly in choosing which of the necessary moves to make first. It was worth considering 15.♗d3 fe 16.♗g5 ♕a5 17.♗h6 (the immediate 16.♗h6 is worse in view of 16...♗xh6 17.♕xh6 ♕a5).

15. ... f6xe5
16. ♗f4-g5 ♕d8-a5
17. ♗f1-d3 b7-b5
18. h4-h5 ...

Finkel was a little bit impatient in renewing the pawn attack. This would have been better after 18.cb ♗b7 19.♘d2.

18. ... b5-b4
19. ♘c3-e4 ...



19. ... ♖f8xf3!

And here is the reason! If 19... ♕xa2? 20.♘xd4 ed 21.♕h3 the black queen is not much use as an attacking force on her own, whereas the white queen is supported by her colleagues and looks set to finish off the enemy king. The intermediate move sacrificing the exchange saves the game, as the queen plus knight duet provides Grunberg with perpetual check.

20. g2xf3 ♕a5xa2
21. h5xg6 ♘d4-b3+
22. ♔c1-c2 ♘b3-d4+
23. ♔c2-c1 ♘d4-b3+
24. ♔c1-c2 ♘b3-d4+
½ - ½

On the whole, the subvariation with 6...c5 7.d5 g6 is better for White. But the positions that arise are so complicated that there should be no surprise at Black's positive results in practice. White's pawn center and the position of his king both require careful attention.

Chapter 36. 5...de 6.fe c5 7.d5 e6

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**f2-f4**	**d6xe5**
6.	**f4xe5**	**c7-c5**
7.	**d4-d5**	**e7-e6**



The database doesn't show Orenburg chess player Argunov as the author of this line, but we do not think his ownership can be questioned. The immediate attack on White's pawn center leads to positions that are far sharper than those with the fianchetto analyzed in the previous chapter.

8. ♘b1-c3 ...

The rook sacrifice with 8.d6? ♕h4+ 9.g3 ♕e4+ 10.♕e2 ♕xh1 11.♘f3 is no good at all. There are a number of refutations: 11...♗d7, 11...♘c6, and 11...♘xc4 12.♘bd2 ♘xe5! – the mechanism for trapping the queen doesn't work.

8. ... e6xd5

If 8...♕h4+ 9.g3 ♕d4 10.♕e2 ed 11.♘b5 ♕xc4 12.♕xc4 ♘xc4 13.♗xc4 dc 14.♘c7+ ♔d8 15.♘xa8 ♗e6 16.♘e2 ♘c6 17.♘f4 (Vesselovsky – Hausner, Czech Republic 1999) and in the time that it will take for Black to liquidate the white knight White will probably make gains.

9. c4xd5 c5-c4

The continuation 9...♕h4+? 10.g3 ♕d4 11.♗b5+! ♗d7 12.♕e2! ♘xd5 13.e6 has been rejected by theory without any circumstances appearing that could rehabilitate it. Timman suggests that Black can continue 13...fe 14.♕xe6+ ♘e7 15.♘f3 ♕b4 16.♗xd7+ ♘xd7 17.♘g5 0-0-0 18.♘f7 ♘c6, but 19.a3 ♕a5 20.♗g5 (instead of the dubious capture of the rook) wins easily.

The pawn's move prevents the white bishop from developing and opens the path for the black bishop.

10. ♘g1-f3 ...

White has a large choice, but not all of the options are equally good. After 10.♗e3 ♗b4 11.♗xb6 ♕xb6 12.♗xc4 ♗c5 13.♘ge2 0-0 White wins a pawn but the king gets stuck in the center. If Black continues 11...ab 12.♘f3 b5 13.♗e2 ♕b6 14.a3 ♗xc3+ 15.bc 0-0 16.♕d4 ♘d7 17.0-0 the king heads to the kingside but the number of pawns is equal.

On the other hand 10.d6!? causes Black problems. Locking in the bishop makes mobilization on the kingside very difficult. If 10... ♘c6 11.♘b5!? ♕h4+ 12.g3 ♕e4+ 13.♕e2 ♕xh1 14.♗g5! (Morris) White gains a crushing attack in return for the rook. For example, 14...f6 (14...♗e6 15.0-0-0 ♔d7 16.♗g2 ♕xh2 17.♗xc6+ winning the queen) 15.♘c7+ ♔f7 16.e6+ ♔g6 17.♗e3, again planning to capture the queen (Bender – Rogulj, Croatia 2002).

White is not required to play aggressively here: 11.♗f4 ♗e6 (11... g5? 12.♘e4! gf 13.e6!) 12.♘f3 h6 (12...♘d7 13.♘g5! ♘dxe5 14.♘xe6 fe 15.♗xe5 ♘xe5 16.♕h5+ ♘g6 17.0-0-0) 13.♘d4 ♕d7 14.♗e2 ♘xd4 15.♕xd4 ♗e7 16.a4 ♗h4+ 17.g3 ♗d8 18.a5 ♕c6 19.0-0 ♘d7 20.♗f3 ♕a6 (Glek – Laketic, Porto San Giorgio 2003) 21.♗d5 ♗xa5 22.♗e3 0-0 23.♕e4 with impressive centralization. Glek proposes 16.♘e4! ♗h4+ 17.g3 ♗d8 18.♘c5 ♕c6 19.♖f1! as an improvement (the white king is safer in the center) 19...♗d5 20.e6! 0-0 21.e7, winning material without compensation.

10. ... ♗f8-b4

It has become fashionable in recent decades to pin the queen's knight rather than the king's knight. The excitement seen after 10...♗g4 is the subject of Game 39.

11. ♗f1xc4 ...

It's hard to understand why after 11.♗g5 ♕xd5 12.♕xd5 ♗xc3+ 13.bc ♘xd5 14.0-0-0 Timman believes the position to be bad for Black. The pawn structure nullifies that advantage of the bishop pair. Pirrot versus Tischbierek (Saarbruecken 2002) logically reached a draw from here: 14...♘e7 15.♗xc4 ♘bc6 16.♖hf1 ♗e6 17.♗xe6 fe 18.♘d4 ♘xd4 19.♖xd4 ♖c8 20.♔b2 ♘d5 21.c4 ♘b6 22.♔b3 ♖f8 23.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 24.♗d2 ♔e8 25.♗b4 ♖c7 26.♗a5 ♖c6 27.♗b4.

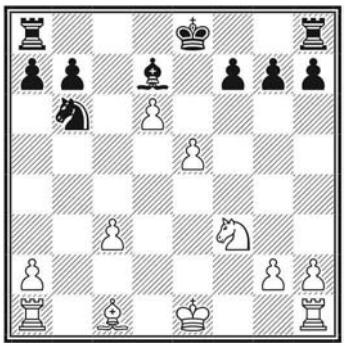
11. ... ♗b4xc3+

Castling would enable White to retain a powerful pawn center together with the menacing bishop pair. Black resigned after 11...0-0? 12.♗b3 ♗g4 13.0-0 ♘8d7 14.♗f4 ♖e8? 15.e6! fe 16.de (Folk – Sikorsky, Pardubice 1993) in the face of material losses (16...♗xe6 17.♗xe6+ ♖xe6 18.♕b3).

12. b2xc3 ♘b6xc4
13. ♕d1-a4+ ♘b8-d7
14. ♕a4xc4 ♘d7-b6
15. ♕c4-b5+ ...

White occasionally returns the pawn in order to prevent his opponent from castling after 15.♕d4 ♕xd5 16.♗a3. But he cannot achieve even this modest aim: 16...♕xd4 17.♘xd4 ♘c4 18.♗d6 ♗d7 19.0-0 ♘xd6 20.ed 0-0 21.c4 b6 22.♖ac1 ♖ac8 with equality (V.Belov – Koniushkov, Moscow 1996).

15. ... ♕d8-d7
16. ♕b5xd7+ ♗c8xd7
17. d5-d6 ...

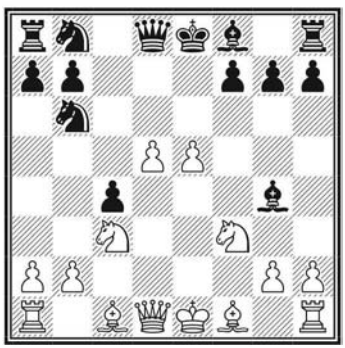


Keres believed that Black has no compensation for the pawn in this position. Timman, by contrast, believes chances to be equal due to the presence of opposite-colored bishops and Black's pressure along the light squares. The truth is somewhere in between these two views. Black still needs to demonstrate equality via careful play, as in the case with 17...♖c8 18.♗d2 ♘c4 19.0-0 ♘xd2 20.♘xd2 0-0 (he could have won the pawn back) 21.♖f3 ♖c5 22.♖e3 ♖fc8 23.♖c1 b5 (Durao – V.Bagirov, Kusadasi 1990) or 17...♘c4 18. 0-0 ♖c8 19.♖e1 ♖c5 20.♗e3 ♖a5 21.♗d4 ♗e6 22.♘g5 ♔d7 23.♖f1 h6 24.♘f3 ♖e8 25.♖f2 b6 (Murey – Wohl, Metz 2002).

Game 39
Y.Gruenfeld – L.Ljubojevic
Riga 1979

On the face of it, the famous battle between Bronstein and Ljubojevic (from the earlier Interzonal in Petropolis, 1973) is a more appropriate game for commentary. However, firstly, it has been analyzed to death, and secondly, from the theoretical point of view, Ljubo's duel with Gruenfeld is more suitable.

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**f2-f4**	**d6xe5**
6.	**f4xe5**	**c7-c5**
7.	**d4-d5**	**e7-e6**
8.	**♘b1-c3**	**e6xd5**
9.	**c4xd5**	**c5-c4**
10.	**♘g1-f3**	**♗c8-g4**



11. ♕d1-d4 ...

Useful centralization with tempo. The exchanging combination 11.♗xc4!? has been underestimated by theoreticians, although in the key variation 11...♘xc4 12.♕a4+ ♘d7 13.♕xc4 ♗xf3 14.gf ♘xe5 15.♕e2 ♕h4+?! 16.♔d1! the initiative for the doomed knight is a bit of an illusion. In reply to 11.♗e2!? the line 11...♗c5 12.♘g5! ♗f5

13.♖f1 ♗g6 14.h4 h6 15.h5 ♗d3 16.♗xd3 cd 17.♖xf7! hg (17...♘xd5 18.♕xd3!) 18.♖xg7 ♘xd5 19.♕f3 ♘e7 20.♕f7+ ♔d7 21.♕d5+ is no good (Foisor), so Black should first swap the knight with 11...♗xf3 12.♗xf3 ♗c5.

11. ... ♗g4xf3
12. g2xf3 ♗f8-b4
13. ♗f1xc4 0-0
14. ♖h1-g1 ...

The fairly old game Bonner – McKay (Dundee 1976) had gone unnoticed: 14.♗e3 ♘8d7 15.♗b5 ♗c5 16.♕f4 ♗xe3 17.♕xe3 ♕h4+ 18.♔f1 ♕b4 19.♗xd7 ♘xd7, and 20.♖b1 ♖fe8 21.f4 ensures that White retains the better chances. 14.♗h6!? has not been sufficiently tested. After 14...gh? (the question-mark, originally belonging to Bagirov, has been later deleted by Kasparov, but in fact it should be restored) 15.e6 ♗e7 16.♖g1+ ♗g5 17.f4 ♘c6 White has the very strong move 18.♕e4. It would be better for Black to give up the exchange for some compensation: 14...♘xc4 15.♕g4 g6 16.♗xf8 ♕xd5 17.♗h6 ♘d7. Timman recommended 16.♕xc4 ♗xc3+ 17.bc ♖e8 18.0-0-0 ♖xe5 19.♕d4, but this line doesn't look to be an improvement due to 19...f6 20.d6 ♕d7 21.♕c4+ ♕e6 22.♕xe6+ ♖xe6 with an equal endgame.

14. ... g7-g6

Let's pause here and enjoy playing through the miniature between Ljubojevic and Honfi (Cacak 1970): 14...♕c7? 15.e6! f6 16.♗h6 ♕xc4 17.♖xg7+ ♔h8 18.♖g8+! ♔xg8 19.♕g1+. But in the game that we are analyzing the Yugoslav Grandmaster decided to fix Honfi's mistakes and play Black.

15. ♗c1-g5! ...

It would be wrong to choose 15.♗h6? ♘c6! 16.♕e4 ♘xe5! 17.♗xf8 ♕xf8 18.♗e2 (it would have been better to attempt to salvage the game with 18.♗b3 ♘ec4! 19.0-0-0) 18...♖e8 19.♔f1 ♘ec4 20.♕d3 ♘xb2 21.♕d4 ♗c5 22.♕g4 f5 23.♕g3 ♗xg1 24.♕xg1 ♕b4 with an irresistible attack (Magrini – Giustolisi, Milan 1974). Bronstein's novelty (repeated by Gruenfeld) had a decisive impact on the outcome of the Interzonal in Petropolis...

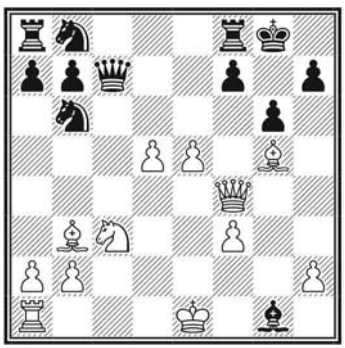
15. ... ♕d8-c7

Kasparov is probably inaccurate in his assessment of 15...♕c8?! (he suggested 16.♖g4 ♗c5 17.♕f4 ♘xc4 18.♕xc4 ♘d7 19.♕e4 ♘xe5!, and the knight cannot be taken as the queen gets captured), whereas Timman seemed to be correct with 16.♗b3! ♗c5 17.♕h4 ♕f5 18.0-0-0 ♗xg1 19.♖xg1 ♖c8 20.e6. The queen needs to control e5 so that after 16.♖g4?! ♘xc4 17.♕xc4 he takes the pawn with check. Now the gloves are off.....

16. ♗c4-b3! ♗b4-c5
17. ♕d4-f4 ♗c5xg1

...he accepts the challenge! If 17...♖e8? then Kasparov's proposal 18.♗f6 ♘8d7 19.♘e4 ♖xe5 20.d6

♗xd6 21.♗xf7+ ♔f8, should be continued correctly 22.♕h6+! ♔xf7 23.♕xh7+ ♔e6 24.♗xe5 ♘xe5 25.♖xg6+! ♘xg6 26.♕xg6+ ♔e7 27.♕f6+ ♔d7 28.♖d1 winning back the piece and coming out two pawns ahead. While if 19...♘xe5? then 20.♖xg6+!! wins straight away (Marjanovic – Filipovic, Yugoslavia 1974).



18. d5-d6 ...

In between the games Bronstein – Ljubojevic and Gruenfeld – Ljubojevic, two more games were played supplying food for thought:

Gheorghiu – Ljubojevic (Manila 1973): 18.♔e2? ♕c5 19.♖xg1 ♕xg1 20.♗f6 ♕g2+ 21.♔e3 ♕xb2 22.♔d3 ♘8d7 23.♘e4 ♖ac8 24.♕h6 ♘xe5+ 25.♔e3 ♖c3+, and 0-1.

Y.Gruenfeld – Letzelter (Buenos Aires 1978): 18.0-0-0?! ♘8d7 19.♖xg1 ♕xe5 20.♕xe5 ♘xe5 21.♖d1 ♘xf3 22.♗e7 ♖fe8 23.d6 ♔g7 – and White only managed to achieve a draw due to poor technique by the French master.

And so: Gruenfeld was spotted playing White in the Argunov Variation, while Ljubojevic was also happy with it.

18. ... ♕c7-c5

The game Bronstein versus Ljubojevic continued 18...♕c8?! 19.♔e2? ♗c5? 20.♘e4! ♘8d7? 21.♖c1 ♕c6 22.♖xc5! ♘xc5 23.♘f6+ ♔h8 24.♕h4 ♕b5+ 25.♔e3! h5 26.♘xh5 ♕xb3+ 27.ab ♘d5+ 28.♔d4! ♘e6+ 29.♔xd5 ♘xg5 30.♘f6+ ♔g7 31.♕xg5 followed by another ten or so unforced moves. A startling game! And regrettably, not immune to major mistakes. Black missed first a win (19...♕c5 20.e6 ♕f2+ 21.♔d3 ♘6d7!) and then a draw (20...♘6d7 21.♗f6 ♘c6 22.♖d1 ♘xf6+ 23.♘xf6+ ♔g7 24.♘h5+ gh 25.♕g5+). On the other hand, 19.0-0-0! would have left Black in difficulties. 19...♗c5? 20.e6! fe 21.♕e5 ♖e8 (21...♘d5 22.d7!) 22.♗h6 ♕d7 23.♘e4! ♘c6 24.♘f6+ would lose, so he should have sought chances with the help of 19...♕c5 20.e6! ♕e3+ 21.♕xe3 ♗xe3+ 22.♗xe3 fe.

Ljubojevic places his queen on the key g1-a7 diagonal and then moves it to the long diagonal, which is equally important. White attacks the queen with tempos but fails to gain any advantage.

19. ♘c3-e4 ♕c5-d4!

In Kasparov's variation 19... ♕b4+? 20.♔f1 ♗d4 21.♘f6+ ♔h8 22.♖e1! ♗c5 23.♖e4 White gains the fourth rank and wins.

20. ♖a1-d1 ♕d4xb2
21. e5-e6?! ...

White plays his ace – in the form of his central pawns – but at the wrong moment. Later, in a game with Wiemer (Tecklenburg 1984), Yehuda Gruenfeld moved in the right direction: 21.♘f6+ ♔h8 22.♖d2 ♕a1+ 23.♔e2 ♘c6! 24.♕h4 h5 but here too he was over hasty with driving his e-pawn forward – 25.e6? ♘d4+ 26.♖xd4 ♕xd4 27.e7 ♕xh4 28.♗xh4 ♗xh2 29.ef♕+ ♖xf8 30.d7 ♖d8 31.♘g4 hg 32.♗xd8 gf+ 33.♔xf3 ♘xd7 34.♔g2 ♗e5 35.♗xf7 ♔g7 36.♗d5 b6. Black converted his two extra pawns into a win, although if instead of 27...♕xh4+ he had played 27...♕xd6 then he would have saved himself some time too. The correct continuation was 25.♘xh5! ♘d4+ 26.♖xd4 ♕xd4 27.♘f4+ ♔g8 28.♗f6 ♕f2+ 29.♕xf2 ♗xf2 30.♘xg6! ♗c5 31.♘e7+ ♔h7 32.♗c2+ ♔h6 33.♘f5+ ♔h5 34.♘g3+ with perpetual check, or 30...♖fe8 31.♔xf2 with a sharp but approximately equal endgame.

Instead of 23.♔e2 White could have opted for the poisonous 23.♗d1 with the killer threat ♕f4-h4. Even without a computer Timman demonstrated in his analysis that the threat could be neutralized with the unexpected 23...♗e3! If 24.♕xe3 ♘c4 25.♘g4! ♘d7 26.♕d4 ♕xd4 27.♖xd4 ♘cb6 the position is unclear but Black can still hope to exploit his exchange advantage.

21. ... ♘b8-d7
22. e6-e7 ♕b2xh2

There is no point in taking with the bishop with the intention of forcing a queen swap. After 22... ♗xh2?! 23.ef♕+ ♖xf8 24.♕h4 ♗e5 25.♔f1 ♕h2 26.♕xh2 ♗xh2 27.a4 or 25.♗e7 ♖c8 26.♗xf7+ ♔g7 27.♗b3 ♕g2 28.♕g4 ♕xg4 29.fg White has no risk of losing.

23. e7xf8♕+ ♖a8xf8
24. ♕f4xh2 ♗g1xh2
25. ♘e4-f6+ ♔g8-g7
26. ♘f6xd7 ♘b6xd7
27. ♗g5-e7 ♖f8-b8
28. ♔e1-f2? ...

He should have played 28.♖c1 to threaten an invasion on c7. If 28... ♘e5, then 29.♔f1, avoiding the capture of the pawn with check. A draw here is a more likely outcome than a Black victory.

28... ♗h2-e5!
29. ♖d1-c1 ♘d7-c5!

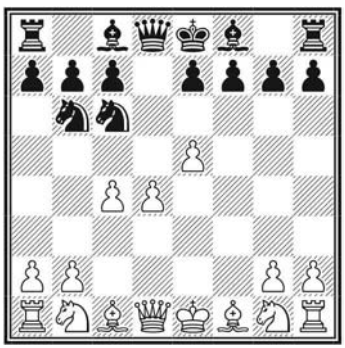
This manoeuvre, missed by Gruenfeld, decides the game. The Israeli Grandmaster was simply outplayed when faced with the Argunov system – one laboriously earned draw in three games!

30. ♖c1-d1 ♗e5-f6
31. ♗e7xf6+ ♔g7xf6
32. ♗b3-c4 ♖b8-d8
33. ♔f2-g3 a7-a6
34. ♗c4-f1 ♔f6-e5
35. f3-f4+ ♔e5-e6
36. ♗f1-c4+ ♔e6-f6
37. ♔g3-f3 b7-b5
0-1

Even if we were to consider 10... ♗b4 to be an adequate response to 10.♘f3, the move 10.d6!? remains unchallenged. Black has no arguments to make here and we send the Argunov Variation off to the archive.

Chapter 37. Other deviations from the tabiya

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**f2-f4**	**d6xe5**
6.	**f4xe5**	**♘b8-c6**



Unlike after 6...c5, the attacked pawn cannot move, so it us usually defended in one of two ways. 7.♘f3 is played in Game 40.

The continuation 7.c5 is one of the amazing mysteries of the Alekhine Defense. This was played in 30-odd games contained in the Megabase and each time Black returned his knight to the center. The majority of players on both sides of the board in this line were amateurs, although grandmasters also appear in it. For example, the position in the game between Tukhaev versus Nosenko (Voronezh 2014) was approximately equal after 7...♘d5 8.♗c4 ♗f5 9.♘e2 e6 10.0-0 ♗e7 11.♘bc3 ♘xc3 (11... ♘db4!?) 12.bc 0-0 13.♘f4 ♕d7. But why shouldn't Black gain a material advantage by capturing a central pawn here?! Obviously 7...♕xd4!? 8.cb? ♕h4+ 9.♔e2 ♗g4+ 10.♘f3 ♖d8 is no good for White, but even after 8.♕xd4 ♘xd4 9.cb ♘c2+ 10.♔d2 ♘xa1 11.bc ♔d7!? the wandering knight won't get caught (12.b4 ♔xc7 13.♗d3 g6 14.♗b2 ♗h6+ 15.♔e2 ♖d8 16.♗xa1 ♖xd3). So we have to place a question-mark against 7.c5.

7. ♗c1-e3 ♗c8-f5
8. ♘g1-f3 ...

Caution! The white pawns need to be blocked with e7-e6. If 8.♘c3 then the continuation 8...♕d7 9.♘f3 ♗g4? leads to disaster after 10.d5! ♗xf3 11.e6! fe 12.♕xf3 ed 13.cd ♘b4 14.0-0-0 (14.♗b5 c6 15.dc bc 16.0-0 is even more convincing) 14...0-0-0 15.a3 ♘a6 16.♗xa6 ba 17.d6! (Rasidovic – Stefanovic, Caorle 1981), and only 17...♔b8

will postpone the destruction of Black's position.

8.♘c3 e6 9.♘f3 leads to the tabiya (Chapter 8). Instead of 9.♘f3, playing 9.♗e2 on the one hand avoids the 9...♗g4 continuation, but on the other hand means that White doesn't have the chance to play 9.♘f3 ♗e7 10.d5!?

8. ... ♘c6-b4

If 8...e6 then there is no reason not to play 9.♘c3. If 9.♗e2, then 9...♘b4 transposing to the main line, while White hardly needs to play the prophylactic 9.a3 in the usual lines with ♗f8-e7. Finally, 9.♗d3?! ♗g4 causes so much danger to the d-pawn that White will need to waste a tempo with 10.♗e2.

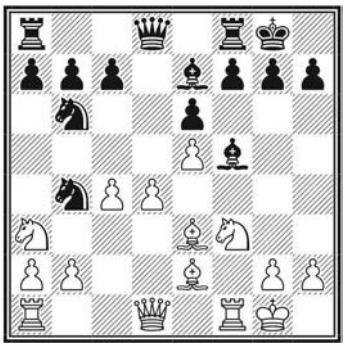
9. ♘b1-a3 e7-e6

10. ♗f1-e2 ♗f8-e7

10...c5 11.0-0 ♘c6?! 12.dc ♘d7 13.♘b5 ♘xc5 was seen way back in the game Euwe versus Landau (Amsterdam 1927). White gained a strong advantage via 14.♘fd4! ♗g6 15.♘xc6 bc 16.♕xd8+ ♖xd8 17.♘xa7, but 11...a6!? Destroys the knight's career straight away and it's quite uncertain whether White is better here. It's also the case with 11.dc ♕xd1+ 12.♖xd1 ♘d7 13.♘d4 a6!? – the white knight will be stuck at a3 for ages.

11. 0-0 0-0

Diagram



This is a very complicated position, whose evaluation depends on whether each player selects the right plan. Katalymov versus Zoltek (Bad Zwischenahn 2003) dived into an attack on the king and soon came to regret it – 12.♕e1 a5 13.♕g3 ♗g6 14.h4?! ♘a4 15.♕h3 (15.♗c1 c5! 16.dc ♘d3) 15...♘xb2 16.h5 ♗f5 17.g4 ♗d3 18.♖f2 ♗xe2 19.♖xe2 ♘4d3 20.h6 g6 21.c5 b6 22.♖f1 bc 23.dc ♖b8. He should have activated his problem knight: 12.♕d2 c5 13.♘b5 ♘c2 14.♖ad1 a6 15.♘d6 ♗xd6 16.ed ♕xd6 (Sztercsco – Pejko, Slovakia 2000), and 17.♗f2 ♕e7 18.♕a5 ♘d7 19.dc leads to an advantage for White. On the other hand Black shouldn't have weakened the d6 square, instead playing something like 12...a5 13.♘b5 ♘c2 14.♖ac1 ♗b4 15.♘c3 ♗xc3 16.♕xc3 ♘b4 17.♕b3 ♘c6.

Game 40

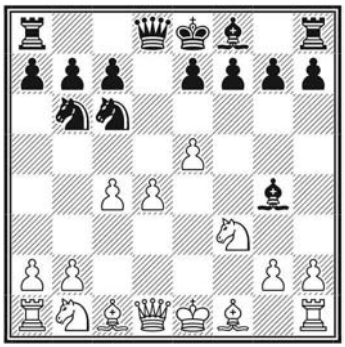
N.Matinian – Bu Xiangzhi

Guimaraes 2012

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6

2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5

3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
5. f2-f4 d6xe5
6. f4xe5 ♘b8-c6
7. ♘g1-f3 ♗c8-g4



This pin once again forces White to deal with his central pawn.

8. ♗c1-e3 ...

Bagirov analyzes in detail the sharp variation 8.e6 fe 9.c5 recommended by Sorokin and introduced to practice by Ilyin-Zhenevsky. It seems, though, that this variation has not yet proved its reliability. Winiwarter failed to survive against Harringer (Austria 2000): 9...♘d5 10.♗b5 ♕d7 11.♘bd2 g6 12.♕a4 ♗g7 13.0-0? (13.h3 ♗xf3 14.♘xf3 0-0 15.0-0 looks like the lesser evil) 13...♘e3 14.♖e1 ♘f5 15.♖e4 ♗xf3 16.♘xf3 ♕d5 17.♖g4 ♖d8, and the d4 pawn is on its last legs. Moreover, contrary to Bagirov's analysis, the immediate capture of the pawn far from seriously damages Black's position. If 9...♗xf3 10.♕xf3 ♘xd4 11.♕f2 ♘a4! 12.♗e3 ♕d5 13.♘a3 0-0-0 14.♗c4 ♕xc5 15.♗xe6+ ♔b8 16.0-0 g5 White still has to prove that he has compensation.

The unclear continuation 8.♗e2 e6 9.♘c3 ♗xf3 10.♗xf3 ♘xd4 11.♗xb7 ♖b8 12.♗e4 c5 needs to be tested in practice. White won't put up with the enemy knight and will definitely exchange it.

8. ... e7-e6

Bagirov rejects 8.♗e3? (his question-mark) due to the continuation 8...♗xf3 9.gf e6 10.♘c3 ♕h4+ 11.♗f2 ♕f4, but here we should continue a bit more. This actually looks like a position similar to that after 7.♗e3 ♗f5 8.♘c3 e6 9.♘f3 (a tabiya) 9...♗g4 10.♗e2 ♗xf3 11.gf ♕h4+ 12.♗f2 ♕f4 with the only difference being the location of the light-squared bishop (Game 41). However, if we now make two strong moves for White: 12.c5 ♘d7 13.♗b5, then he wins back the lost tempo! Chances here are equal, for example 13...♗e7 14.0-0 ♖d8 15.♗xc6 bc 16.♕e2 ♗h4 17.♗xh4 ♕xh4 18.♕e4 ♕xe4 19.fe (Suetin – Forchert, Lenk 1999).

9. ♘b1-c3 ...

9.♗e2?! is played more often, but this isn't in keeping with the position. Black should continue 9...♗xf3 10.gf ♕h4+ 11.♗f2 ♕f4 12.c5 ♘d5 13.♘c3 0-0-0 and he has retained a piece on d5 while White cannot avoid losing material.

9. ... ♗f8-e7

It's also possible to play a

different move order: 9...♗xf3 10.gf ♗e7. After 11.♕d2 ♕h4+ 12.♔d1 ♕d7 13.♔c2 ♘b4+ 14.♔b1 0-0-0 15.♖g1 ♘c6 16.♖g4 ♗e7 17.♔c2 (but not 17.♖xg7? ♘xe5!) White needs to focus solely on defending his pawn center.

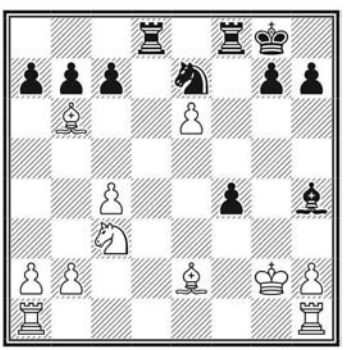
10. ♗f1-e2 ♗g4xf3
11. g2xf3 ♗e7-h4+
12. ♔e1-f1 f7-f6

This move comes naturally (either straight away or else after castling), as soon as the white king moves to the f-file. White's position is already difficult.

13. f3-f4 0-0
14. d4-d5 ...

If 14.♔g2 ♕e8! 15.♔h3 fe 16.de ♖d8 17.♕c1 ♗e7 18.♖d1 g5! the white king is again under attack. If here 17.♕g1 ♗e7 18.♕g4 ♘d4 19.♗xd4 ♖xd4 20.♖hf1 ♖f5 the queen may have come to help him but the problems are still there.

14. ... ♘c6-e7
15. d5xe6 f6xe5
16. ♕d1xd8 ♖a8xd8
17. ♔f1-g2 e5xf4
18. ♗e3xb6 ...



18. ... f4-f3+!

This intermediate move allows the Chinese Grandmaster's rook to invade the second rank with a winning endgame. After 18...ab? 19.♖ad1 Matinian would have paused for breath.

19. ♗e2xf3 ♖d8-d2+
20. ♘c3-e2 a7xb6
21. ♖h1-d1 ♖d2xb2
22. ♖a1-b1 ♖b2xa2
23. ♖b1-a1 ♖a2-b2
24. ♖a1-b1 ♖b2xb1
25. ♖d1xb1 ♘e7-f5

25...♘g6 26.♖b3 ♘e5 27.♗xb7 (this move can now be played as the bishop on h4 is undefended) 27... ♖f2+ 28.♔h3 ♖xe2 29.♔xh4 ♔f8 was probably stronger, and Black should once again emerge with a winning position, two pawns ahead.

26. ♗f3xb7 ♘f5-e3+
27. ♔g2-h3 ♗h4-e7
28. ♘e2-c3 ...

It would have been better to choose 28.♖b3 ♘xc4 29.♖c3 b5 30.♗c6 ♘d6 31.♖b3, taking on b5 and counting on holding on to e6.

28. ... g7-g5?!

Bu Xiangzhi avoids a somewhat obvious trap (28...♘xc4? 29.♘d5 with a draw), but ignored the stronger 28...♖f5. The Russian junior once again has drawing chances.

29. ♖b1-e1 ♗e7-c5
30. ♘c3-b5? ...

The correct move was 30.♗c6 (threatening 31.♖xe3) 30...g4+ 31.♔h4 ♗e7+ 32.♔g3 ♘c2

33.♖d1 h5 34.♘d5 ♖f3+ 35.♔g2 ♘e3+ 36.♘xe3 ♖xe3 37.♖f1, and the opposite-colored bishops make a draw likely. The pawn on c7 turns out to be poisoned...

30.	**...**	**♖f8-f5**
31.	**♘b5xc7**	**g5-g4+**
32.	**♔h3-g3**	**♗c5-d6+**
33.	**♔g3-h4**	**♖f5-e5**
34.	**♘c7-b5**	**♗d6-e7+**
35.	**♔h4-g3**	**♘e3-f5+**
36.	**♔g3-f4**	**♖e5xe1**
37.	**♔f4xf5**	**h7-h5**
38.	**♘b5-c3**	**♔g8-g7**
39.	**♘c3-d5**	**♗e7-d6**
40.	**♗b7-c8**	**♖e1-e5+**

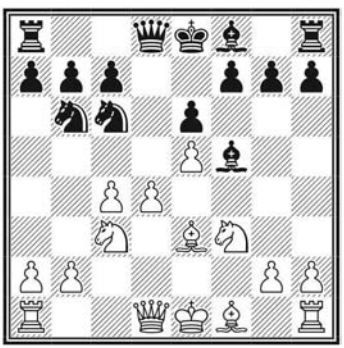
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If 7.♘f3 can be considered an obviously dubious exercise, then the variation 7.♗e3 ♗f5 8.♘f3 ♘b4 9.♘a3 is better than its reputation. But it's important for White to extricate his knight from a3 as soon as the chance arises!

Part 8
The Four Pawns Attack. The tabiya.

Chapter 38. 9...♗b4

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**f2-f4**	**d6xe5**
6.	**f4xe5**	**♘b8-c6**
7.	**♗c1-e3**	**♗c8-f5**
8.	**♘b1-c3**	**e7-e6**
9.	**♘g1-f3**	**...**



9. ... ♗f8-b4

This was first played by Tarrasch against Lasker (Ostrava 1923). Its main aim is to counter the threat of d4-d5, rather than to threaten to double White's pawns (all the more so given that the b2 pawn defends d4 once it gets to c3).

We were introduced to the 9...♘b4 sortie in the history section (Game 2). 9...♕d7 will be considered in Chapter 39, 9...♗g4 will be considered in Chapter 40, while the main move 9...♗e7 is squeezed into Chapters 41 and 42.

10. ♗f1-e2 ...

When faced with 10.♗d3 Tarrasch would avoid exchanging bishops (10...♗g4), which is definitely not a bad move. Short in his game against Ghaem Maghami (Teheran 2013) preferred 10...♗xc3+ 11.bc ♗xd3 12.♕xd3 ♘a5 13.c5 ♘bc4 14.0-0 h6 15.♗f2 b6 16.♕e4 ♕d5 17.♕g4 0-0-0 (17...0-0!?) 18.♕xg7? ♖hg8 19.♕f6 ♘d2!, and White was the exchange down. 13.♘d2 ♕h4+ 14.♗f2 ♕h5 15.0-0 0-0 16.♖ab1 is more promising for White, and the horses' legs remain tethered.

10.♖c1 (Boleslavsky) is dubious in view of 10...♗g4 11.a3 ♗xc3+ 12.♖xc3 ♗xf3 13.gf ♕e7 followed by castling long. Or 11.♗e2 ♗xf3 12.gf ♕h4+ 13.♗f2 ♕h6 – having found a great place for his queen

Black can choose to castle either side – a matter of taste.

10. ... 0-0

10...♕d7 as played in Game 41 avoids taking such an early decision on what to do with the black king.

11. 0-0 ...

♖a1-c1 is no better here than on the previous move. After 11...♘a5 12.♗g5 ♕d7 13.c5 ♘d5 14.♗d2 Black is not forced to comply with Burgess's recommendation 14... b6 (with equality after 15.♘xd5 ♗xd2+ 16.♕xd2 ♕xd5 17.b3 ♘c6 18.0-0 ♖fd8 19.♖fd1 h6), instead preferring 14...♗xc3 15.bc b5!? 16.0-0 h6 17.♘h4 ♗h7.

11. ... ♘c6-a5

He plans to undermine the center with c7-c5. Sometimes Black also captures on c3, which deforms White's pawn structure but also strengthens the weak d4 pawn. Note that if 11...♗xc3 12.bc ♘a5 13.♘d2 ♕d7 14.♖f4 (with the idea of ♕d1-f1) White firmly defends c4 and is ready for action on the kingside.

12. ♘f3-d2 ...

If 12.c5 ♗xc3 13.bc ♘bc4 the knight pair clearly cramps White. The game could continue 14.♗c1 b5 15.a4 a6 16.ab ab 17.♕e1 ♖b8 18.♕g3 ♔h8 19.♘h4 ♗c2 20.♖a2 ♗b3 21.♗xc4 (Rajlich – S.Farago, Budapest 2000) 21...♗xc4 22. ♖xa5 ♗xf1 23.♔xf1 b4, with compensation for the material. It's simpler to achieve equality via 17... ♘b3 18.♖xa8 ♕xa8 19.♘h4 ♘xc1 20.♕xc1 ♗e4.

12. ... ♗f5-g6



Black was twice defended by Croatian master Leventic in this position. He played a great game against Novak (Pula 2000): 13.a3?! ♗xc3 14.bc c5 15.♖f4 ♕c7 16.♕f1 ♖ac8 (the siege of c4 is functioning like clock-work) 17.♖c1 cd 18.cd ♘d5 19.♖f3 ♘xe3 20.♖xe3 ♖fd8 21.♕f4?! ♕b6 22.♘f3 ♕b2 23.♖cc3 ♕a1+ 24.♔f2 b5 25.c5 a6 – and the pawn chain here is no better than White's bad pieces. Later, Leventic cleverly outwitted Drazic (Croatia 2004) after 13.♗f2 c5 14.dc ♘d7 15.♘ce4 ♘xe5 16.a3 ♗xd2 17.♘xd2 ♘d3 18.b4 ♘xf2 19.♖xf2 ♘c6 20.♗f3 ♕c7 21.♗e4 ♖fd8 22.♗xg6 hg 23.♕b3 ♘e5. White should probably have gone for 13.♖c1 c5 14.dc ♘d7 15.a3 ♗xc3 16.♖xc3.

Game 41
S.Bromberger – A.Kremenetsky
Gausdal 1998

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**f2-f4**	**d6xe5**
6.	**f4xe5**	**♘b8-c6**
7.	**♗c1-e3**	**♗c8-f5**
8.	**♘b1-c3**	**e7-e6**
9.	**♘g1-f3**	**♗f8-b4**
10.	**♗f1-e2**	**♕d8-d7**



Kremenetsky combines developing the queen with ♘c6-a5. With the immediate 10...♘a5 the knight may simply find itself cut out of the game – 11.c5 ♘bc4 12.♕a4+ c6 13.♗d2 ♘xd2 14.♕xb4 ♘xf3+ 15.♗xf3. Shamkovich in his game with Rohde (New York 1978) brought the knight back into play, but after 11...♘d5 12.♗d2 ♘c6 13.0-0 0-0? 14.♗g5 f6 15.ef gf 16.♘xd5 ♕xd5 the bishop's retreat to e3 led to a White win. Obviously, exchanging in a timely manner with 13...♗xc3 would have avoided catastrophe.

11.	**0-0**	**♘c6-a5**

Queenside castling is not popular here due to the opening of the b-file after 11...0-0-0 12.c5 ♗xc3 13.bc ♘d5 14.♗d2. However, the attack on the b1 square gives Black time to counterattack.

12.	**c4-c5**	**♘b6-c4**
13.	**♗e3-c1**	**♗b4xc3**
14.	**b2xc3**	**b7-b6**
15.	**♘f3-h4**	**♗f5-e4**

If on the previous move Black didn't want to create an escape hole for his bishop (with 14...h6), then the logical move here is 15... bc. After 16.♘xf5 ef 17.dc ♕xd1 18.♖xd1 ♘xe5 it won't be easy for the bishops to get into play.

16.	**♖f1-f4**	**♗e4-d5**
17.	**♖f4-g4**	**f7-f5**

This is the right move. If 17...g6 18.cb ab 19.♕f1 the dark squares are very weak.

18.	**e5xf6**	**g7xf6**
19.	**♖g4-f4**	**♔e8-e7??**



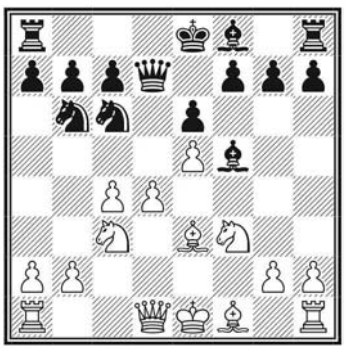
A tactical blunder with fatal consequences. He should have played 19...f5 or 19...♕e7 with equal chances.

20. ♖f4xf6! **♔e7xf6?**
21. ♕d1-f1+ **♔f6-g7**
22. ♗c1-h6+! **♔g7-g8**
23. ♕f1-f6 **♗d5-e4**
24. ♖a1-f1
1-0

We welcome the bishop's crossing of the demarcation line! This leads to complicated positions that are fairly promising for Black while avoiding the main theoretical lines.

Chapter 39. 9...♕d7

1. e2-e4 **♘g8-f6**
2. e4-e5 **♘f6-d5**
3. d2-d4 **d7-d6**
4. c2-c4 **♘d5-b6**
5. f2-f4 **d6xe5**
6. f4xe5 **♘b8-c6**
7. ♗c1-e3 **♗c8-f5**
8. ♘b1-c3 **e7-e6**
9. ♘g1-f3 **♕d8-d7**



When combined (as a rule) with castling long, this move raises the pressure on d4. The Megabase does not contain the games of Tartakower, Gruenfeld or Sozin, with whom Bagirov associates the 9...♕d7 variation. However, it does contain the game Naegeli – Euwe (Bern 1932), which in substance was a perfectly modern contest.

10. ♗f1-e2 **...**

The 10.d5 variation is best seen in the game Tomic – Gipslis (Dortmund 1978): 10...ed 11.cd ♘b4 12.♘d4 ♘6xd5 13.♘xd5 ♘xd5 14.♘xf5 ♗b4+ 15.♔e2 0-0-0 16.♘d6+ ♗xd6 17.♕xd5 ♕f5 18.♕c4, after which the players agreed a draw in what was a complex position with approximately equal chances. The tragi-comic miniature Bullockus – Eccles (correspondence game(!) 1985) continued: 14...0-0-0 15.♘d6+?? ♗xd6 16.ed ♘xe3 – the American chess player probably knew about the predecessor but forgot that he hadn't been checked. So immediate castling is the best solution, as it stops the interference motifs and promises excellent prospects.

10. ... **0-0-0**

Sometimes players prefer 10...

♖d8, so as to avoid exposing the king to danger on the queenside. On the other hand, the center is hardly a safe haven either, as can be seen in the example Hamalainen – Eriksson (Finland 2002): 11.0-0 ♗g4 12.♘g5 ♗xe2?! 13.♕xe2! ♘xd4 14.♗xd4 ♕xd4+ 15.♔h1 ♖d7 16.♖ad1 ♕xc4 17.♕f3 ♕c6?! (17...♗b4 18.♖xd7 ♔xd7 19.♕xf7+ ♔c8 is stronger, escaping on the queenside) 18.♘ce4 ♘d5 19.♘xf7 ♖g8 20.♘fg5 (20.♕h5 would win straight away) 20...h6 21.♘h7 ♗b4 22.a3 ♗a5 23.♖xd5 ed 24.♘hf6+ gf 25.♘xf6+ ♔d8 26.♘xg8, and the attack is unstoppable. Black should review the game Farran Martos – Narciso Dublan (Sabadell 2010): 12...Nxc4 13.♖xf7 (if 13.♗f2 then Bagirov's proposal is best: 13... ♗e7 14.♘xf7 ♗xe2 15.♕xe2 ♔xf7 16.♕xc4 ♖hf8) 13...♘xe3 14.♖xd7 ♘xd1 15.♖xd8+ ♘xd8 16.♗xg4 ♘e3 17.♗h3 c5 18.♘b5 cd 19.♘c7+ ♔e7 20.♖e1 g6 21.♘gxe6 ♘xe6 22.♘xe6 ♗h6 23.♘xd4 ♖d8 24.♘f3 ♘d1 25.♖e2 ♗e3+ 26.♔f1 ♗b6. White was a pawn up, but the opposite-colored bishops and activity of the black pieces appropriately led to a draw soon after.

11. 0-0 ...

The game Naegeli – Euwe referred to above might not have been won by the future world champion if, after 11.♕d2 f6 12.ef gf 13.0-0 ♖g8 14.♖fd1 ♕g7 15.♗f1 ♘e5 16.♘xe5 fe 17.♕f2 ♗g4 18.♖d2 ed, White had continued 19.♖xd4 ♘d7 20.♗e2 ♗f5 21.♖ad1. However, 15...♗b4 was a stronger move with the idea of swapping the piece and establishing his other bishop on e4.

11. ... f7-f6

As an alternative to undermining the center he could have threatened the central pawn via 11...♗g4. Bagirov considered the reply 12.♘g5!? to be a mistake, but in fact it is an overture to unpredictable complications. After 12...♗xe2 13.♕xe2 f6 14.ef gf 15.♖xf6 ♘xd4 16.♕f2 ♗e7 17.♖f7 ♘f5 18.♗c5 White clearly has the more active position (Hribar – Mestek, Ljubljana 2010). Predojevic and Kopylov (Germany 2010) really muddied the waters with 12...♘xc4 13.♖xf7 ♗e7 14.♗f2 ♘xb2 15.♕b3 ♘xd4 16.♕xb2 ♘xe2+ 17.♘xe2 ♕d1+ 18.♗e1 ♗c5+ 19.♔h1 ♕xe2 20.♕xe2 ♗xe2 21.♘xe6 ♗d4! 22.♖xc7+ ♔b8 23.♖b1 ♗b6 24.♖xg7 ♖dg8 25.♗b4 – Black's bishops do not compensate for White's extra passed pawn. The non-forcing line 13...♕e8!? 14.♘b5 ♗e7 (14...♘xe3? 15.♖xc7+ ♔b8 16.♕b3) 15.♗f2 ♘xb2 16.♕c2 ♗xe2 17.♕xe2 ♖d7 18.d5! ♖xd5 19.♕xb2 a6 20.♘xc7 ♔xc7 21.♖xg7 is extremely complicated, although it looks like White comes out better.

Let's now consider the moves 11...♗g4 12.c5 ♘d5 13.♘xd5 ♕xd5. Here, 14.♘g5 leads to a forced series of exchanges: 14...

♗xe2 15.♕xe2 ♘xd4 16.♗xd4 ♕xd4+ 17.♔h1 ♕d2 18.♕xd2 ♖xd2 19.♖xf7 ♗xc5 20.♘xe6. This could continue, for example, with an intriguing rook ending after 20...♗b6 21.♘xg7 ♗d4 22.e6 ♗xb2 23.♖af1 ♗xg7 24.♖xg7 ♖e8 25.♖xh7 ♖xe6 (Svatos – Freisler, Czech Republic 2009) – and it becomes a race between the passed pawns.

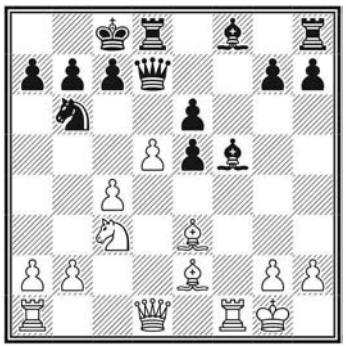
Black's queenside castling provokes 14.b4!? Now, if 14...♕e4 15.♕d2 f6 16.♖ae1! ♘xe5 (Schnider – Mestek, Austria 2010) 17.♘xe5 fe 18.♗xg4 ♕xg4 19.♖f7 it's unclear how Black should complete his development. Undermining the center would have been better a move earlier (14...f6 15.ef gf 16.b5 ♘e7), but why not begin with it here?

12. d4-d5!? ...

He launches the attack on the king's residence. It is known that if White first carries out the pawn swap then the breakthrough in the center is at the very least no worse, with Black's counterplay along the g-file insufficient. After 12.ef gf 13.d5 ♕g7 14.♕b3 ♖g8 15.♖f2 ed 16.cd ♘b4 17.♘d4 ♗h3 18.♘e6 ♗xe6 19.de ♘d3 (Hecht – Cafferty, Teeside 1972) this complicated position (in Bagirov's view) is hopeless for Black: 20.♗xd3 ♖xd3 21.♖e1 ♗e7 22.♕c2! (instead of 22.♕b5?!, which was actually played) 22...♕g6 23.♘b5 ♘d5 24.♗c5! a6 25.♘xc7! ♗xc5 26.♕xc5 ♘xc7 27.♖c2. Black should instead have tested the strength of his defensive wall with 14...ed 15.cd ♘b4 16.♘e1 ♕g6.

12. ... ♘c6xe5

13. ♘f3xe5 f6xe5



Bagirov shares an amazing fact here: the position in the diagram was tested in 72 different games in a thematic tournament in Moscow in 1932. And this despite the fact that it was clearly not the most fashionable line of what was a modestly popular opening in those years!

14. a2-a4 ...

14.♖c1 would somewhat unsubtly prepare the c4-c5-c6 march, which was beaten back by Fuderer (in his game with ♗hend, Munich 1954): 14...♔b8 15.c5 ♘xd5 16.c6 ♘xe3 17.♕xd7 ♖xd7 18.cd ♗c5 19.♖f3 ♘g4+ 20.♔h1 ♘f2+ 21.♖xf2 ♗xf2 – and White failed to hold on in the ending. Yudovich's recommendation 15.a4 ed 16.a5 d4 17.ab fails to take into account tactics available to Black, hence 17...cb 18.♘a4 ♗d6!? 19.♗f2 d3! wins back the piece with benefits.

14. ... a7-a5
15. ♘c3-b5 ♗f8-b4
16. d5-d6 ♘b6-a8

If 16...c5 17.♗d2 the queen sacrifice suggested by Sozin: 17... ♕xd6!? 18.♘xd6+ ♖xd6 does promise Black handsome practical chances. However, White has a little trick with 17.♗g5! ♖df8 18.♗d2 that prevents the sacrifice and, most probably, breaks down the enemy defenses.

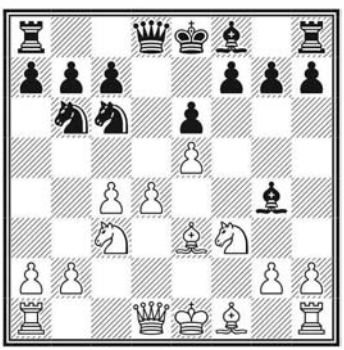
17. c4-c5 ♔c8-b8
18. ♗e2-f3 c7-c6
19. ♘b5-a3 e5-e4
20. ♗f3-e2 b7-b6
21. c5xb6 ♕d7xd6

Here, Kotronias against Short (Gibraltar 2003) exchanged queens and in so doing gave up the lion's share of his advantage. Whereas after 22.♕b3 ♕e7 23.♗a6 (countering the consolidating moves ♕e7-b7) Black is in a difficult position.

Overall, the black king isn't comfortable on the queenside, for which reason 10...♖d8 deserves more consideration and, it seems, rehabilitates 9...♕d7.

Chapter 40. 9...♗g4

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
5. f2-f4 d6xe5
6. f4xe5 ♘b8-c6
7. ♗c1-e3 ♗c8-f5
8. ♘b1-c3 e7-e6
9. ♘g1-f3 ♗f5-g4



Black sacrifices a tempo here in order to further pressurize the d4 pawn. There have been quite a lot of games in this line, even though White could have prevented the pin with 9.♗e2.

10. ♕d1-d2 ...

10.♗e2 is analyzed in Game 42.

10. ... ♗f8-b4

This provokes being attacked by a2-a3, which exposes the b3 square. 10...♗e7 is also good, providing a choice between equal castling options. Note, however, that after 11.0-0-0 0-0 12.h3 ♗h5 13.g4 ♗g6 14.h4 ♗b4! 15.h5 ♗e4 16.♖h3 f6! 17.ef ♕xf6 18.♘h2 e5 Black takes control of the center, rather than the queenside.

By tradition, it is worth checking

the exchange here, followed by intervention by the black queen. White is also fine here: 10...♗xf3 11.gf ♕h4+ 12.♗f2 ♕h5 13.c5!? ♕xf3 14.♖g1 ♘d5 15.♗g2 ♕f4 16.♘xd5 ♕xd2+ 17.♔xd2 ed 18.♗xd5 (Nakamura – Benjamin, Philadelphia 2006) 18...♘xd4! 19.♗xd4 ♖d8 20.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 21.e6+!? ♔xe6 22.♔c3 ♖g8 with an almost certain draw. 14...♘d7 15.♗g2 ♕h5 16.♘b5 ♔d8 17.♕e3 is less reliable, according White a lasting initiative for the pawn.

11. a2-a3 ...

If 11.♗e2, then 11...♗xf3 12.gf ♕h4+ 13.♗f2 ♕h3 14.0-0-0, and now Black can choose from immediate queenside castling, exchanging on c3 followed by queenside castling, the manoeuvre ♘c6-e7-f5 again followed by queenside castling, a knight sortie ♘b6-a4, and maybe more options... Having a wide choice is a positive symptom!

11. ... ♗b4-e7

Or 11...♗xc3 12.♕xc3 ♗xf3 13.gf ♕h4+ 14.♗f2 ♕f4 – Black can do this now, because the white queen has taken her eye off this important square. As usual, Black has no problems here.

12. ♘c3-e4 ...

The point of the bishop's return trip ♗f8-b4-e7 becomes clear after 12.0-0-0? ♘a5. In reply to 12.b4, Bagirov recommends 12...♗xf3 13.gf ♗h4+ 14.♔d1 f6! 15.f4 g5(?), which looks to us to be very shaky due to 16.d5! However, if Black adds 15...fe 16.de then undermining White with 16...g5 works here. Moreover, White cannot now play 16.fe 0-0 17.♔c2 a5 18.b5 ♖xf1! 19.♖axf1 ♘xc4.

12. ... ♕d8-d7

If 12...a5 13.♗e2 ♗f5?! 14.♘g3 ♗g6 15.♖d1 f6?! 16.d5 ♘xe5 (Prudlo – V.Bagirov, Berlin 1996) 17.♗xb6 cb 18.d6 ♘xf3+ 19.♗xf3 ♗f8 20.♗xb7 ♖b8 21.♗c6+ ♔f7 22.0-0 Black's position is pitiful. Obviously, 13...♗xf3 14.gf ♗h4+ 15.♔f1 ♘e7 (planning ♘e7-f5) is stronger and contains a better plan; the same idea can also be deployed a move earlier: 12...♗xf3 13.gf ♗h4+ 14.♘g3 ♕e7 15.0-0-0 0-0-0 16.♕c3 f6.

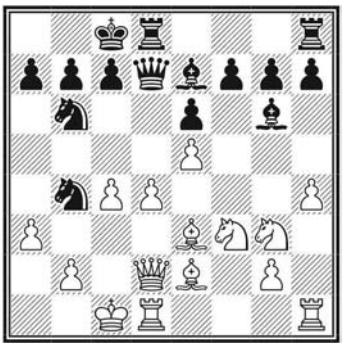
13. ♗f1-e2 ...

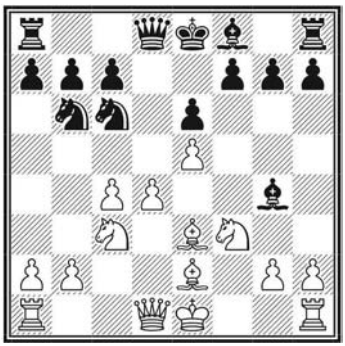
In reply to 13.b4 Black plays the classical 13...♗xf3 14.gf 0-0-0 15.♖d1 ♗h4+! 16.♘g3 f6 17.b5 ♘e7 18.♕a5 ♔b8 19.♗e2 ♘f5 20.♗f2 ♕f7 21.f4 g5! (Fedorov – Baburin, Istanbul 2000) – Black undermines the pawn chain at just the right time and it's bad news for the white king.

13. ... 0-0-0
14. 0-0-0 ♗g4-f5
15. ♘e4-g3 ♗f5-g6
16. h2-h4?! ...

16.♗d3 ♗xd3 17.♕xd3 ♘a5 18.c5 ♘bc4 19.♘e4 is more reliable, with an approximately equal, albeit complicated position.

16. ... ♘c6-b4!





Hort (versus Huebner, ♗iel 1987) brilliantly justified returning the bishop to the b1-h7 diagonal. 17. ab? ♕a4 18. ♗d3 ♘xc4! loses immediately. The game continued 17. b3 ♘c2 18. c5 ♕c6! 19. ♗d3 ♘xe3 20. ♕xe3 ♘d5 21. ♕f2 ♗xd3 22. ♖xd3 ♕a6 23. ♖hd1 ♕xa3+ 24. ♕b2 ♕xb2+ 25. ♔xb2 f5, and ♗lack eventually converted his extra pawn into a point.

Game 42

G.Jones – V.Sveshnikov

Reykjavik 2011

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**f2-f4**	**d6xe5**
6.	**f4xe5**	**♘b8-c6**
7.	**♗c1-e3**	**♗c8-f5**
8.	**♘b1-c3**	**e7-e6**
9.	**♘g1-f3**	**♗f5-g4**
10.	**♗f1-e2**	**...**

This unpinning enables the black queen to intervene. We first encountered it in the commentary to Game 40 (7.♘f3 ♗g4 8.♗e3), but now we shall see what the extra tempo accords White.

10. ... **♗g4xf3**

11. g2xf3 **...**

11.♗xf3 ♘xc4 12.♗f2 is occasionally played. Black then needs to overcome his greed (12... ♘xb2?! 13.♕e2 ♗a3 14.♗xc6+ bc 15.0-0 with compensation) and instead reserve the b6 square for his knight.

11. ... **♕d8-h4+**

If 11...♕d7 Finkel suggests continuing 12.♕d2 ♗b4 13.0-0-0 ♘e7 14.a3 ♗xc3 15.♕xc3 ♘f5 16.♗f2 with nice prospects for the bishop pair.

12. ♗e3-f2 **♕h4-f4**

If 12...♕h3, then 13.c5 ♘d5 14.♘xd5 ed 15.♕b3 0-0-0 16.♗b5 ♘e7 17.0-0-0 and White has a spatial advantage and better placed pieces. The long castling

here requires White to find a more modest square for his queen.

13. c4-c5 ...

The long blackened reputation of the queen exchange here has never been restored: 13.♕c1?! ♕xc1+ 14.♖xc1 0-0-0 (14...♗b4!?) 15.♖d1 ♗b4 16.0-0 ♗xc3 17.bc ♘a5 18.c5 ♘d5 19.♖c1 ♘f4 20.♗d1 ♘c4 21.♗g3 g5 22.♗xf4 gf 23.♔f2 ♖hg8 24.♗b3 ♘e3 (Preuss – Malbran, Buenos Aires 2004) – exploiting the 'eternal' knight Black starts to convert his positional advantage.

13. ... ♘b6-d5

On the other hand, after 13... ♘d7 the horse turns into an old nag and White can exchange queens: 14.♕c1 ♕xc1+ 15.♖xc1 0-0-0 16.a3 ♘db8 17.♖d1 ♘e7 18.f4 ♘bc6 (the reshuffling of moves rehabilitates the knight) 19.♗c4 g6 20.d5!? ed 21.♘xd5 ♘xd5 (21...g5!?) 22.♗xd5 ♗h6 23.♗h4 ♖d7 with equality (Jones – Short, Bunratty 2011). Instead of 20.d5 White could castle, all the more so given that after 20.0-0 h6 21.♔h1 g5 22.♗g1 gf 23.♗xf4 ♘f5 24.♗b3 Black has to deal with ♗b3-c2 or ♘c3-e2-g3, while the breakthrough in the center is still on the cards.

Artashes Minasian (in his duel with Kengis, Frunze 1989) retained the queens: 14.♘e4 ♗e7 15.♕b3 0-0-0 16.♖d1 ♗h4 17.♘g3 f6!? 18.♕xe6 ♔b8 19.ef ♘xf6 20.♕e3 ♘d5 21.♕xf4 ♘xf4 22.♗b5 ♘b4 23.a3 ♘c2+ 24.♔f1 ♗f6 25.♘f5 ♘h3 with the initiative for the pawn. Whereas, after 17...♘db8 18.♕c3 ♕h6 and ♘c6-e7 Black held the initiative without giving up a pawn. Therefore, doubling the enemy pawns in the middlegame is worth considering: 14.♗b5 ♗e7 15.0-0 0-0 16.♗xc6 bc 17.♗g3 ♕e3+ 18.♔h1 ♖ab8 19.♖e1 ♕h6 20.♖b1 ♗h4 21.♔g2 (Czakon – Barglowski, Lubniewice 2002) with the unexpected liberating move 21...f6! 22.ef ♘xf6 23.♖xe6?! ♗xg3 24.hg ♘g4!

14. ♘c3xd5 e6xd5

15. ♕d1-d2 ...

If 15.♕d3 ♗e7 16.0-0 ♗g5 17.♖ad1 f6 18.♔h1 fe 19.de 0-0-0 20.♗g3 ♕e3 21.f4 ♕xd3 22.♖xd3 ♗e7 it is hard to resist the white bishops (Garma – Datu, Manila 1991). Black needs to set up a blockade – 16...♕h6 17.♗e3 ♕e6 18.f4 f5, relying on castling kingside.

15. ... ♕f4-f5

After exchanging queens Rozentalis versus Bologan (France 2010) was unable to fully neutralize the white bishops: 15...♕xd2+ 16.♔xd2 ♘e7 17.♗b5+ c6 18.♗d3 g6 19.b4 ♗h6+ 20.♔c3 ♔d7 21.b5 ♖hc8 22.h4! b6 23.h5 ♗f8 24.hg hg 25.♖h7 ♔e6 26.a4. According to Finkel, he should have pushed his b-pawn a little earlier: 21...b6 22.bc+ ♘xc6 23.♖ab1 bc 24.dc ♗f4.

Nakamura played solid moves against Pavasovic (Austria 2008) on both flanks: 16...g6 17.♗e3 h5 18.♗b5 ♔e7 19.♗g5+ ♔e6

20.♔c3 h4 21.h3 ♘e7 22.f4 ♘f5 23.♗e2 b6 24.b4 a5 25.a3 ♗e7 26.♗g4 ♗xg5 27.fg ♔e7 28.♗f3 ♖hd8 29.♖hb1 ♖a7 – and chances were equal. Equality can also be firmly retained with 26...f6 27.ef ♗xf6 28.♖he1+ ♔f7 29.♗xf6 ab+ 30.ab ♔xf6 (Finkel).

16. 0-0-0 a7-a5
17. ♕d2-d3 ♕f5-d7
18. a2-a3 a5-a4
19. f3-f4 g7-g6
20. ♖h1-g1 h7-h5?!

Black has blockaded the queenside and starts to implement a sensible strategy on the kingside – but he is one move too late! He needed to play 20...♗h6 21.♗g3 ♘e7.

21. ♗e2-f1! ♗f8-h6?

Sveshnikov Jr. is consistent, but the only way to hang on was via 21...♕f5 22.♕xf5 gf, hence also admitting that 21...h5?! would be useless, too.

22. ♗f1-h3! ♗h6xf4+
23. ♔c1-b1 ♕d7-e7
24. e5-e6 0-0-0
25. e6xf7+ ♔c8-b8
26. ♖g1xg6 ♗f4xh2

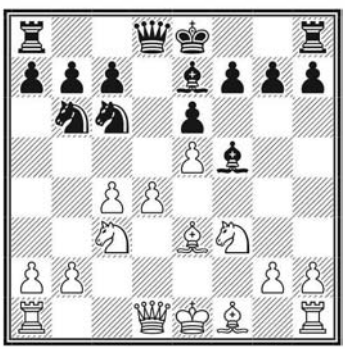
If 26...♕xf7 then White wins with 27.♖xc6! bc 28.♕c3. Black's move played can be met either with an exchange sacrifice or with White's actual response.

27. ♗h3-e6 h5-h4
28. ♖d1-h1 ♗h2-e5
29. ♗f2-e3 ♗e5-f6
30. ♖h1-f1 h4-h3
31. ♖g6xf6 h3-h2
32. ♗e6xd5!
1-0

White so often gets caught out and fails even to achieve equality that maybe we should consider 9. ♗e2 to be a more accurate move. In any case, after 9. ♘f3 ♗g4 developing with 10. ♗e2 is clearly safer than playing 10. ♕d2.

Chapter 41. 9...♗e7 10.♗e2

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
5. f2-f4 d6xe5
6. f4xe5 ♘b8-c6
7. ♗c1-e3 ♗c8-f5
8. ♘b1-c3 e7-e6
9. ♘g1-f3 ♗f8-e7



Black completes the development of his kingside and undermines the central pawn via f7-f6. In this chapter, White follows his opponent's example and mobilizes his own kingside. In the following chapter we see how White dives into hand-to-hand battle with 10.d5.

10. ♗f1-e2 0-0
11. 0-0 f7-f6
12. e5xf6 ...

Other replies are quite rare. Bursting through in the center with 12.d5 forces Black to play accurately. For example, 12...ed 13.ef ♗xf6 14.cd ♘e7 15.♗c5 ♗xc3? 16.bc ♘bxd5 17.♗c4 c6 (Fier – V.Sergeev, Teplice 2012) 18.♘h4! ♗e6 19.♖xf8+ ♕xf8 20.♕e2, and Black can't untangle himself without losing a piece. 15...♗g6 16.♖c1 ♗f7 was correct for Black, forcing White to play 17.d6 and gaining complete equality in a symmetrical pawn structure.

Handoko versus Baburin (Liechtenstein 1992) went for a queen attack: 12.♕b3 a5 13.d5 a4 14.♘xa4 ♘a5 15.♕b5 ♘bxc4 16.♗xc4 c6 17.dc bc, and instead of 18.♗b6?! ♕b8 19.♗xe6+ ♗xe6 20.♕e2 ♗c4 21.♕e4 ♗xf1 22.♖xf1 fe (with no compensation for the exchange) White should play 18.♗xe6+ ♗xe6 19.♕b6 ♘c4 20.♕xd8 ♗xd8 21.♗c5 ♖xa4 22.♗xf8 ♘e3 23.♖fc1 ♔xf8 24.♖xc6 ♗d5 25.♖c8 ♔e7 26.ef+ gf.

The evaluation of 12.♘h4 hasn't changed. After 12...fe 13.♘xf5 ef 14.d5 ♘d4 15.♗xd4 ed 16.♕xd4 ♘d7 17.♔h1 ♗d6 18.♗d3 g6 19.♖ae1 ♖e8 20.♗c2 ♖xe1 21.♖xe1 ♕f8 22.g3 ♖e8 23.♖xe8 ♕xe8 24.♔g2 ♗c5 25.♕d2 ♕e5 26.♕e2 ♕d4 (Brandenburg – Miroshnichenko, Germany 2011) Black is a little bit better in every respect – his pawn structure, his pieces and his king. If 17...♗c5 Black should at first follow the old game Znosko-Borovsky – Colle (Paris 1929) but after 18.♕d2 ♕h4 19.g3 ♕h3 20.♘b5 ♘f6 21.♗f3 ♖ac8 22.♖ad1 he should head for a drawing ending with opposite-colored bishops – 22...♘e4 23.♕g2 ♕xg2+ 24.♔xg2 ♘d6 25.♘xd6 cd.

12. ... ♗e7xf6
13. ♕d1-d2 ...

If 13.d5, then apart from 13...ed and then transposing to 12.d5 positions Black also has a good move in 13...♘a5, threatening the pawn on c4. Depending on White's reply he may draw by perpetual check after 14.♗c5 ♖e8 15.♘d2 ♗e5!? 16.♖c1 ♘bxc4! 17.♗xc4 ♕h4 18.g3 ♗xg3 19.hg ♕xg3+.

13. ... ♕d8-e7

13...♕e8 not only frees up the square for the rook but also has the aim of switching the queen to the kingside. The rapid game Dominguez – Vitiugov (St. Petersburg 2012) continued 14.♖ad1 ♖d8 15.♕e1 ♖d7 16.♕g3 ♕g6 17.♕xg6 ♗xg6 18.♖d2 ♖fd8 19.♖fd1 h6 20.h3 ♘a5 21.b3 ♘c6 – having weakened the long diagonal

Black prevents d4-d5. Advancing the central pawn earlier promises nothing for White: 20.d5 ♗xc3 21.bc ed 22.♗xb6 ab 23.cd ♘e7 24.c4 ♖a8 with counterplay along the rook file.

After 14.♗g5 ♖d8 15.♗xf6 ♖xf6 16.c5 ♘d5 17.♘xd5 ♖xd5 18.♗c4 ♖d8 19.♕e3 ♕h5 20.h3 ♔h8 (in the interesting variation 20...♗xh3!? 21.♘g5 ♘xd4 22.♖xf6 gf 23.♘xh3 ♕xc5 24.b3 ♘xb3 25.♗xe6+ ♔g7 26.♕xc5 ♘xc5 27.♗f5 ♖d2 Black still has to struggle for a draw) 21.♗e2 ♕h6 22.♕xh6 gh 23.♖ad1 ♗e4 thanks to the pressure on d4 Black has nothing to worry about (Rodriguez Talavera – Granda Zuniga, Dos Hermanas 1991). It looked like the Peruvian Grandmaster had chosen a continuation that was refuted in the game Ignatiev – Larsen (Moscow 1962). However, the struggle in that game was evaluated under the influence of the sensational result. After 16.♖ad1 ♗g4 17.♘e4 ♖f5 18.♕e3 ♗xf3 19.♖xf3 ♖xf3 20.gf ♕g6+?! 21.♔h1 ♕h6? 22.f4 ♖e8 23.♘g5 the Muscovite master won seven moves later. Whereas if 20...e5 21.d5 ♘d4 22.♔h1 ♕e7 or 21.de ♖xd1+ 22.♗xd1 ♕xe5 23.b3 ♘d7 Black would have been fine.

14. ♖a1-d1 ...

If 14.c5 ♘d5 15.♘xd5 ed the frontal attack on the d-pawn gets forgotten and the e-file now becomes critical. Chances are equal – 16.♖ae1 ♖ae8 17.♗b5 ♕d7 18.♗g5 a6 19.♗xc6 ♕xc6 20.♗xf6 ♖xe1 21.♕xe1 ♖xf6.

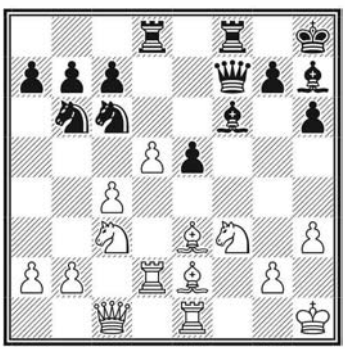
14. ... ♖a8-d8
15. ♕d2-c1 h7-h6

This counters g2-g4-g5 and at the same time creates a bolt-hole for his bishop. After 15...♖d7 16.h3 opening the little escape hole 16... h6 becomes necessary, so it makes sense to play it straight away.

16. ♔g1-h1 ♔g8-h8
17. h2-h3 ♗f5-h7
18. ♖f1-e1 ...

There is no longer any point in the white bishop remaining on the c1-h6 diagonal, so White often moves it to g1. Simon outplayed Velicka (Cappelle-la-Grande 2002) after 18.♗g1 ♖d7 19.♖d2 ♖fd8 20.♖fd1 ♕e8 21.b3 ♘e7 22.♗d3 ♗xd3 23.♖xd3 ♕g6 24.♕f4 c5?! 25.♘e4, however, 20...e5! simplifies play in the event of exchanges on e5 but complicates it if White continues 21.d5 ♘b4 22.a3 e4 23.♘e1 ♘a6, but with fairly good prospects for Black.

18. ... ♕e7-f7
19. ♖d1-d2 e6-e5
20. d4-d5 ...



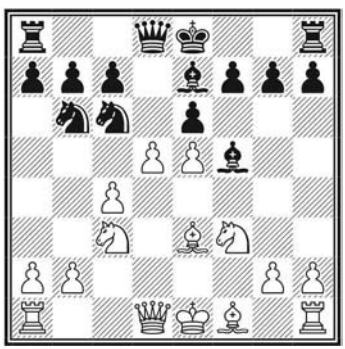
Black has completed his plan to advance, but the position is still unclear. Bagirov analyzed this line in detail in his monograph, which makes his game against Suetin (Biel 1997) all the more interesting. That game continued 20...♘e7?! 21.♖dd1 ♖fe8 22.b3 ♘f5 23.♘e4 ♘d7 24.♗d3 b6 25.♕b1 ♘f8 26.♗f2 ♘d6 27.♖f1 g5? (27...♗xe4 28.♗xe4 a5 exposes the light-squared squares, yet it was the lesser evil) 28.♘xf6 ♗xd3 29.♕xd3 ♕xf6 30.♘xe5! ♖xe5 31.♗xb6 ♕g7 32.♗d4, and White went on to win. The following line, which is very hard to calculate, justifies the freeing move 19...e5, although Black's 19th move is not at all forced: 20...♘d4 21.♗xd4 ed 22.♘b5 c6 23.dc d3 24.c7 ♖d7 25.c5 ♘c8 26.♘d6 ♕d5 27.♗xd3 ♗xd3 28.♖ed1 ♖xc7 29.♖xd3 ♕xc5 30.♕xc5 ♖xc5 (with equality).

There is nothing particularly new in the line 9...♗e7 10.♗e2. After undermining the center with f7-f6 and the subsequent exchange both players manoeuvre, with White attempting to best prepare c4-c5 and d4-d5 and Black doing the same for e6-e5. With careful manoeuvring by both players the position should be equal.

Chapter 42. 9...♗e7 10.d5

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
5. f2-f4 d6xe5
6. f4xe5 ♘b8-c6
7. ♗c1-e3 ♗c8-f5
8. ♘b1-c3 e7-e6
9. ♘g1-f3 ♗f8-e7
10. d4-d5 ...

The pawn on d4 is so obviously weak that advancing it as soon as possible requires extra analysis.



10. ... e6xd5

10...♘b4 is reviewed in Game 43.

11. c4xd5 ...

The Velimirovic Attack is not only the privilege of the Sicilian Defense.

The Serbian Grandmaster played 11.♗xb6 ab 12.cd ♘b4 13.♘d4 against Kovacevic (Pula 1981) and three decades later against Cmilyte (Marianske Lazne 2010). From the theoretical point of view, however, the subsequent moves of the game Murey – Palatnik (Palma de Mallorca 1989) are more valuable: 13...♗g6 14.♗b5+ c6! 15.dc 0-0! 16.cb ♖b8 17.♘c6 ♘xc6 18.♗xc6 ♕c7, and perpetual check is possible here – 19.♗d5 ♗a3! 20.♕e2 ♗xb2! 21.♕xb2 ♕xe5+ 22.♔f1 ♗d3+ 23.♔f2 ♕f6+ 24.♗f3 ♕d4+. Murey however gifted his opponent a win: 19.♘d5?? ♗h4+ 20.g3 ♕xc6 21.gh, and 21...♕c4! ended resistance.

The computer failed to help rehabilitate 14.d6?!: 14...0-0! 15.a3 (15.de ♕xe7 16.♗e2 ♖ad8 17.0-0 ♕xe5, and after winning back the piece Black is two pawns in front) 15...cd 16.ab ♖xa1 17.♕xa1 de 18.♘f3 ♗xb4 19.♕d1 ♕f6 20.♕b3 ♕f4 21.♗e2 (Chandler – Kengis, Jurmala 1983) 21...♕c1+ 22.♗d1 ♕e3+ 23.♗e2 ♗c5 with irresistible threats.

11. ... ♘c6-b4

12. ♘f3-d4 ♗f5-d7

It's best to avoid the check from b5. After 12...♗g6?! Palatnik's idea doesn't work: 13.♗b5+ c6 14.dc 0-0 15.cb ♖b8 16.a3 (unlike the good alternative 16.0-0, this forces play) 16...♘4d5 17.♘c6! ♘xe3 18.♕xd8 ♘c2+ (Strenzwilk – Gauntt, USA 1971) 19.♔e2! ♗h5+ 20.♔d2 ♗xd8 21.♘xb8 ♘xa1 22.♘c6 ♗g5+ 23.♔d3 ♗g6+ 24.♔e2 ♘b3 25.b8♕ ♖xb8 26.♘xb8 with a decisive material advantage.

On the other hand, in the event of 12...♕d7?! it isn't worth hurrying with the bishop sortie. Play could continue 13.♗b5 c6 14.0-0 ♘4xd5 15.♘xd5 ♘xd5 16.♘xf5 ♘xe3 17.♕xd7+ ♔xd7 18.♗xc6+ bc 19.♘xe3 ♗c5 20.♖xf7+ ♔e6 21.♖f3 ♗d4 and a draw is on the cards. The correct continuation is 13.♕f3! ♗g6 14.d6! (Movsesian – Kirilov, Pardubice 1992), and the pawn is safe due to ♗f1-b5.

13. e5-e6 ...

A short and pretty battle was seen in the game Tsarev – Palatnik (Kiev 1989): 13.♕b3 c5 14.dc bc 15.0-0-0?! ♕c7 16.♗c4 ♘xc4 17.♕xc4 ♕xe5 18.♖he1 0-0 19.a3 ♘d5 20.♘xc6 ♗xc6 21.♘xd5 ♗xa3! 22.ba ♖fc8 23.♗c5 ♗xd5 24.♖xe5 ♗xc4, and White loses his bishop as he cannot leave his rook on the fifth rank. The queenside is not a safe haven for the king here. However, if White plays 15.♗e2 0-0 16.0-0 c5 17.♘f5 ♗xf5 18.♖xf5 then the bishop pair allows him to look to the future with moderate optimism.

The queen move to f3 is found in Game 44.

13. ... f7xe6

14. d5xe6 ♗d7-c6

15. ♕d1-g4 ...

Exchanging queens leaves Black without any problems: 15.♘xc6 ♕xd1+ 16.♖xd1 ♘c2+ 17.♔d2

♘xe3 18.♔xe3 bc 19.♗a6 ♖b8 20.b3?! 0-0 21.♖hf1 ♖fe8 22.♔d3 ♗b4 23.♘e2 ♖xe6 24.♘d4 ♖h6 25.♘f3 ♖h5 26.♗c4?! ♘xc4 27.♔xc4 ♖c5+ 28.♔d3 ♖c3+ 29.♔e4 ♖c2, capturing the second pawn (Ovetchkin – An.Ivanov, Yekaterinburg 2008). The Grandmaster was smartly outplayed, partly due to two mistakes: 20.♖hf1 would have prevented Black from connecting his rooks (instead of the inert 20.b3), while 26 a4 would have kept the opposite-colored bishops on the board.

15. ... ♗e7-h4+

16. g2-g3 ♗c6xh1

In response to 16...♘6d5? Bagirov's recommendation 17.♗h6 looks reasonable (17...♕f6 18.♗xg7 ♖g8 19.♘xc6 ♖xg7 20.♕h5+ ♕g6 21.♕xg6+ ♖xg6 22.♘xb4 ♘xb4 23.0-0-0 with a pawn advantage), but compared with the winning 17.♘xc6! ♘xe3 18.♕xg7 ♘ec2+ 19.♔e2 ♕d3+ 20.♔f2 it hardly deserves a double exclamation-mark. In response to the bishop retreat 16...♗f6 the move 17.0-0-0 recommended by Gligoric is accompanied by one, albeit deserved, exclamation-mark. After 17...♗xh1 18.♘f5 ♕xd1+ 19.♘xd1 ♘c6 20.♘xg7+ ♗xg7 21.♕h5+ ♔d8 22.♕g5+ ♘e7 23.♕xg7 ♖g8 24.♕f7 (Fernandez Garcia – Safranska, Katerini 1992) Black is only one pawn down but his position is hopeless as he cannot coordinate his army.

17. 0-0-0 ...

17.gh 0-0 18.0-0-0 ♕f6 merges back into the main line. As does 17.♗b5+ c6 18.0-0-0 0-0 19.gh ♕f6, but this move order looks questionable after 19...h5! 20.♕g3 cb 21.♗g5 ♕e8! 22.♗h6 ♕e7 23.♖xh1 ♕f6 24.♗e3 ♖ac8 (with insufficient compensation for the exchange) or 23.♖g1 ♕f6 24.♕xg7+ ♕xg7 25.♖xg7+ ♔h8 26.♖g1 ♗c6 27.♗xf8 ♖xf8 – White has nothing much for the piece.

17. ... ♕d8-f6

18. g3xh4 ...

In his youth Peter Leko was a big fan of the Alekhine Defense. The sole loss in this defense by the future world title challenger (according to the Megabase) happened because he refused to castle: 18.♗b5+ c6 19.gh h5 20.♕g3 cb? (20...0-0 21.♗g5 ♕g6 22.♗e7 ♕h6+ 23.♕g5 ♕xg5+ 26.hg ♘xa2+ 27.♘xa2 ♖fe8, and swapping the queens would not reduce the tension) 21.♗g5 ♕g6 22.♕d6 ♘6d5 23.♖f1, and it's time to stop the clocks (Fernandez Garcia – Leko, Dortmund 1992).

18. ... 0-0

19. ♗f1-b5 ...

The bishop needed to be developed, as if 19.♗g5?! it gets destroyed after the virtually winning queen sacrifice – 19...♕xf1+! 20.♖xf1 ♖xf1+ 21.♘d1 c5 22.e7 ♗d5. Here, it's useful to take control of the pawn's promotion square. The game Korman – Alburt (Lund 1976) continued 19.♗e2 ♕e5

20.♗g5 ♗d5 (changing the move order with 19...♗d5 20.♗g5 ♕e5 allows 20.♖g1) 21.e7 ♖fe8 22.♘xd5 ♘4xd5 23.♘f5 ♔h8 24.♗d3 ♘xe7 25.♘xe7 ♖xe7 26.♗xe7 ♕xe7. The passed pawn got on the Grandmaster's nerves, and instead of the very strong continuation 24... ♘f6 25.♗xf6 ♕xf6 he hurried to return the exchange and got to a position with equal chances.

19. ... c7-c6

Previously, the following line caused a debate: 19...♕e5 20.♗g5 (20.♗h6 c5 21.♖g1 g6! 22.♗xf8 ♖xf8 23.♕g5 ♕xg5 24.hg ♗c6 – Black stops the pawn and maintains equality) 20...c5 21.e7 cd 22.ef♕+ ♖xf8 23.♖xh1. After 23...dc 24.♕xb4 cb+ 25.♔b1 ♘d5! repeating moves is best: 26.♕c4 ♖f2! 27.♕c8+ ♖f8 28.♕c4 ♖f2. The interjection 23...h6!? 24.♗xh6 was worth considering, and only after that continuing with 24...dc 25.♕xb4 cb+ 26.♔b1 ♘d5! 27.♕c4 ♖f2 28.♕c8+ ♔h7 (the little escape hole came in useful!) 29.♗d3+ g6 30.♗d2 ♖xd2 31.♗xg6+! ♔h6 32.♕f8+ ♕g7 33.♕xg7+ ♔xg7 34.♗c2 ♖g2 with an imitation of an attempt to win.

20. ♗e3-g5 ...

The light-squared bishop was unable to clear a path for the passed pawn, so the dark-squared bishop now takes over this mission. If 20.♖xh1 cb 21.♘dxb5 ♘6d5 22.♗d4 ♕f4+ 23.♕xf4 ♖xf4 24.♖g1 g6 (Munoz Pantoja – Brusi Noguera, Barcelona 2011) there is no compensation for the exchange.

20. ... ♕f6-e5

The further into the forest he goes, the more Black has reason for optimism. For example: 20... ♗f3!? 21.♘xf3 ♕xf3 22.♕xb4 cb 23.e7 ♖fe8 24.♕b3+ ♔h8 25.♘xb5 (Thompson – Czuhai, USA 1989) 25...♕c6+ 26.♔b1 ♘c4 27.♖c1 a6 28.♖xc4 ♕xb5 29.♕xb5 ab, and Black can achieve a draw.

21. e6-e7 ♖f8-e8



The rapid game Grischuk – Svidler (Odessa 2009) continued 22.♖xh1?! cb 23.♘f3, and now the best move is 23...♕c5! 24.♕e6+ ♔h8 25.♗f6!? ♘d3+ 26.♔b1 ♘f4 27.♗xg7+ ♔xg7 28.♕g4+ ♘g6 29.h5 ♖xe7 30.hg h5 31.♕d4+ ♕xd4 31.♘xd4 ♔xg6. The position has simplified to Black's obvious advantage, as he has retained the exchange advantage. 22.♘f5! is more dangerous, creeping up on the black king from a threatening distance. That said, the computer proposes a choice of lines with

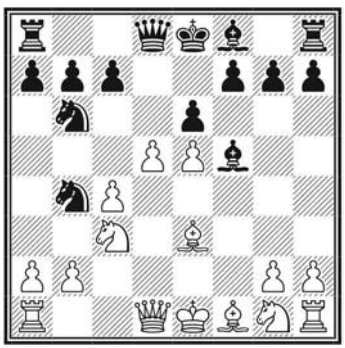
perpetual check – 22...♘xa2+! 23.♘xa2 h5! 24.♕xh5 ♕xf5 25.♖f1 ♕xb5 26.♕f7+ or 24...cb 25.♗d2 ♘c4 26.♘h6+ ♔h7 27.♘f5+.

Game 43

S.Bromberger – P.Gasik

Warsaw 2008

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**f2-f4**	**d6xe5**
6.	**f4xe5**	**♘b8-c6**
7.	**♗c1-e3**	**♗c8-f5**
8.	**♘b1-c3**	**e7-e6**
9.	**♘g1-f3**	**♗f8-e7**
10.	**d4-d5**	**♘c6-b4**



Black avoids exchanging in the center so as to prevent White's bishop from reaching b5.

11. ♖a1-c1 ...

The assessment of 11.♘d4 depends on the quality of the two moves after 11...♗g6 12.a3 c5: 13.ab and 13.♘xe6. If 13.ab cd 14.♕xd4 ♗xb4 then Black successfully storms the pawn center (15.h4!? ♘d7 16.h5 ♗f5 17.♕f4 f6), whereas 14.♗xd4 clearly dispels Black's activity. For example: 14...♗xb4 15.♗e2 0-0 16.d6 ♕h4+ 17.g3 ♕h3 18.♗f3 ♘xc4 19.♕e2 ♕f5 20.0-0 ♕d3 21.♕xd3 ♗xd3 22.♖f2, attacking the enemy queenside.

If 13.♘xe6 fe 14.ab cb 15.♘a4 0-0 16.♘xb6 ab the exchange of knights partially opens the a-file, along which Black obtains sufficient counterplay to equalize – 17.♖xa8 ♕xa8 18.♗e2 b3! 19.♖f1 ♗b4+ 20.♗d2 ♖xf1+ 21.♗xf1 ♗c2 22.♕c1 ♗xd2+ 23.♕xd2 ♕a1+ 24.♔f2 ♕xb2. Further, 15.♘b5 0-0 16.d6 is better than its reputation. The pawn here is a nail that makes it very hard for Black to carry out any attack and forces Black to deal with it in the endgame. White probably has better chances in the continuations 16...♗g5 17.♗d4 ♗h6 18.g3 ♕g5 19.♘c7 ♕f5 20.♗d3! ♕xd3 21.♕xd3 ♗xd3 22.♘xa8 ♘xa8 23.♖xa7 and 17... ♗e3 18.h4 ♖xf1+ 19.♔xf1 ♘xc4 20.♕e2 ♕f8+ 21.♔e1 ♗h5 22.♖f1 ♗xe2 23.♖xf8+ ♖xf8 24.♔xe2 ♖f2+ 25.♔e1 ♗xd4 26.♘xd4 ♖f7 27.♘f3.

11. ... e6xd5

There is no obvious refutation of the attack on the center with 11... f6!?. In this position Velimirovic developed a successful attack against Gipslis's king (Havana 1971), but Black failed to deploy all

of the defensive resources available to him: 12.a3 ♘a6 13.g4!? ♗xg4 14.♖g1 f5 15.h3 ♗xf3 16.♕xf3, and instead of castling (which by itself was not immediately losing) acceptable continuations were 16... g6 17.de c6 18.♘e4 ♘a4!? 19.c5 0-0 or 17...♖b8 18.b4 c6 19.c5 ♗h4+ 20.♗f2 ♗xf2+ 21.♔xf2 ♕h4+ 22.♕g3 ♕d4+ 23.♕e3 ♕h4+ and a repetition of moves.

12. a2-a3 c7-c5

Exchanging the knight for three pawns failed to bring success in the correspondence game Clark – Golyak (1989): 12...♘xc4!? 13. ♗xc4 dc 14.ab ♕xd1+ 15.♖xd1 ♗xb4 16.0-0 ♗d3?! 17.♘d5! ♗xf1 18.♘xc7+ ♔e7 19.♘d5+ ♔e8 20.♖xf1 ♗a5 21.♖a1 ♗d8 22.♘d2 b5 23.♖a6 ♔d7 24.♘e4 ♗e7 25.♗c5 ♗xc5 26.♘xc5+ ♔c8? 27.♖c6+. However, 16...♗xc3 17.bc 0-0 prevents an attack from this small army, and it is extremely difficult here to convert the extra piece into a win.

13. a3xb4 d5-d4
14. ♗e3xd4 c5xd4
15. ♘f3xd4 ...

The game Timman – Marovic (Banja Luka 1974) ended with a catastrophe for White only because of an inexplicable blunder: 15.♕xd4 ♗xb4 16.c5 ♘d5 17.♗b5+ ♗d7 18.♕xd5 ♗xb5 19.♕xb7 ♖b8 20.♕e4 a5 21.♔f2 ♗xc5+ 22.♔g3 0-0 23.♖hd1 ♕b6 24.♘g5?? ♗f2+ 25.♔f3 f5 26.ef ♕xf6+ 27.♔g4 h5+! The Dutchman should have spirited his king to safety (24.h3), although he had no reason to reject a likely draw in the endgame – 21.e6 fe 22.♕xe6+ ♕e7 23.♕xe7+ ♔xe7 24.♘d4.

15. ... ♗f5-g6

If 15...♕b8 then 16.♕e2 is a strong reply, without worrying about blocking the bishop. If 16...♗e6 17.c5 ♘d7 18.c6 bc 19.♘xc6 ♕b6 20.♕e4 then White dominates the center. While in the line 16...♗g6 17.c5 ♘d7 18.e6 ♘e5 19.♕b5+ ♔f8 20.ef a6 21.♕b6 ♗xf7 22.♖d1 Black's pieces are set up too badly for him to claim any serious compensation for the pawn. Or 18.c6 ♘xe5 19.♘d5 ♗h4+ 20.g3 0-0 21.c7 ♕e8 22.gh ♘d3+ 23.♔d1 ♘xc1 24.♕xe8 ♖fxe8 25.♔xc1 ♗e4 26.♗b5 with good chances of winning.

16. c4-c5 ♗e7-g5

The example of Nunn – Holloway (London 1974) is a classic demonstration of offering a sacrifice with 16...0-0!? and its acceptance: 17.cb ♗xb4 18.♗e2 ♕xb6 19.0-0 ♖ad8 20.♖f4 ♗c5 21.♘cb5 ♖fe8 22.♘d6 ♗xd6 23.ed ♕xd6 24.♕f1 ♕b6 25.♖d1 ♕xb2 26.♗c4 ♖e7 27.♘f5 ♕b6+ 28.♔h1 ♗xf5 29.♖xd8+ ♕xd8 30.♖xf5 ♕c7 31.h4 a5, draw. However, if White is happy to be a pawn up then he can play 17.♘f3 ♘d7 18.♗b5 ♗f5 19.0-0 and maintain a clear advantage.

17. ♗f1-b5+ ♔e8-f8
18. ♖c1-a1 ♘b6-d5

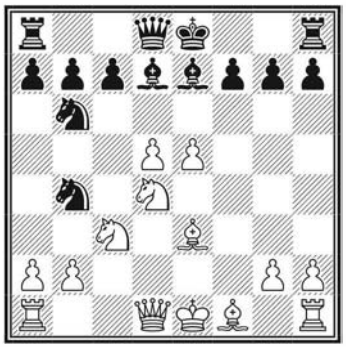
19. ♕d1-f3 ♘d5-c7
20. ♖a1-d1 ♕d8-e7
21. 0-0 ♖a8-d8
22. ♘d4-f5 ♕e7xe5
23. ♖d1xd8+ ♗g5xd8
24. ♘f5-d6 ♘c7xb5
25. ♘d6xf7 ...

The German chess player rejected the simple 25.♘cxb5 ♕e7 26.♘xa7 in favor of a slightly more complicated continuation. He was well aware that the enemy queen + knight tandem was helpless in this case.

25. ... ♘b5-d4
26. ♕f3xb7 ♕e5-e3+
27. ♔g1-h1 ♕e3-d3
28. ♖f1-f4 ♕d3-d2
29. g2-g3 ♕d2-e1+
30. ♔h1-g2 ♘d4-e2
31. ♖f4-f1 ♕e1-d2
32. ♖f1-f2 ♘e2xc3
33. ♖f2xd2 ♗g6-e4+
34. ♕b7xe4 ♘c3xe4
35. ♖d1xd8+ ♔f8xf7
36. ♖d8xh8
1-0

Game 44
S.Das – B.Shivananda
New Delhi 2010

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
5. f2-f4 d6xe5
6. f4xe5 ♘b8-c6
7. ♗c1-e3 ♗c8-f5
8. ♘b1-c3 e7-e6
9. ♘g1-f3 ♗f8-e7
10. d4-d5 e6xd5
11. c4xd5 ♘c6-b4
12. ♘f3-d4 ♗f5-d7



13. ♕d1-f3 ...

The modern treatment of this variation links the queen's sortie with the completion of mobilization on the kingside. But we do need to verify the evaluations of the more 'ancient' continuations.

13. ... c7-c5

The drawback of castling is that if White plays accurately he will retain the strong pawn pair, such as after 13...0-0 14.a3 c5 15.ab cd 16.♗xd4 ♗xb4 17.♗d3 ♕h4+ 18.♗f2 ♕g4 19.♕xg4 ♗xg4 20.♗xb6 ab 21.♖xa8 ♖xa8 22.♔d2.

14. d5xc6 b7xc6

The original game in the 13.♕f3 line, Ligterink – Bohm (Amsterdam 1974), is an excellent example of White's attack in the event of 14... ♘xc6. There followed 15.e6! fe (15...♗xe6 16.♘xe6 fe 17.♗b5 ♗f6 is safer) 16.♗d3 ♗h4+ 17.g3 ♗f6

18.♕h5+ ♔f8 19.0-0 ♔g8 20.♘e4 ♘d5 21.♘g5 ♕e8? 22.♗xh7+ ♔f8 23.♘dxe6+! Given that 23...♗xe6 leads to a mate in two moves the struggle is over.

The light-squared bishop is nothing for Black to be proud of here, so 14...♗xc6 should be considered. It's clear that 15.♕g4 ♘6d5!? 16.♕xg7? ♘xe3 17.♕xh8+ ♗f8 pushes White over the edge, while 16.♗f2 0-0 17.♗e2 needs to be checked in practice.

15. ♗f1-e2 ...

If 15.a3 c5 16.ab cd 17.♗xd4 0-0 18.b5 ♗e6 19.♗f2 White plans to complete his development without giving back the extra pawn. A preferable continuation is 15... ♘4d5 16.♘xd5 ♘xd5 17.♗c4 ♕a5+ (Ljubojevic – Hartston, Las Palmas 1974), and here, apart from 18.♗d2, a good continuation is 18.♔f2!? ♕b6 (18...♘xe3?? 19.♗xf7+ ♔f8 20.♕xe3 ♔xf7 21.e6+ ♔g8 22.ed) 19.b3 ♗g5! 20.♗xd5 cd 21.♖hd1 ♗xe3+ 22.♕xe3 ♖c8 with equality.

These variations are not very complicated, but if we judge from the game Shilin – Nosenko (Mariupol 2003): 15.e6 fe (after 15...♗xe6 16.a3 ♘4d5 17.♘xc6 ♗h4+ 18.♗f2 ♕f6 19.♗xh4 ♕xh4+ 20.g3 ♕g5 chances are equal) 16.0-0-0 ♘6d5 17.a3 ♘xc3 18.♘xe6! ♘ca2+! 19.♔b1 ♗xe6 20.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 21.ab ♘xb4 22.♗e2 ♖f8 23.♕h5+ g6 24.♕a5 ♖f5 25.♕xa7 ♖e5, and the black pieces are somewhat stronger than the white bishop.

15. ... 0-0
16. 0-0 ♘b4-d5
17. ♗e3-f2 ♘d5xc3

17...♕c7 is less accurate, as the queen cannot hold onto this square: 18.♗g3 ♘xc3 19.bc ♕c8 (Dominguez recommended 19... ♕d8 20.♘xc6 ♗xc6 21.♕xc6 ♖c8 22.♕f3 ♘c4, blocking White's passed pawn) 20.♗d3 g6 21.♗e4 ♗g4 22.♕f2 ♘d5?! 23.c4 ♘c3 24.♘xc6 ♘xe4 25.♘xe7+ ♔g7 (Dominguez – Almeida, Santa Clara 2005) 26.♘xc8 ♘xf2 27.♘d6 ♘d3 28.♖ab1 with an extra pawn and an excellent position. Instead of the pointless bishop journey, 22...♗c5 23.♗f4 f5 24.♗c2 ♘d5 is more stubborn.

18. b2xc3 c6-c5
19. ♘d4-f5 ♗d7xf5
20. ♕f3xf5 ♕d8-d2
21. ♕f5-f3 ♖a8-d8
22. c3-c4 ♘b6-a4

Shivananda loses time just like Almeida. He had no clear plan – just like White in fact (the advantage of the bishop pair is for now somewhat abstract). Nevertheless, he should have brought his queen a little closer to his king, via 22...♕c2 23.♖ac1 ♕g6.

23. ♖a1-d1 ♕d2-b2
24. ♖d1xd8 ♖f8xd8
25. ♗e2-d1 ...

Creating the light-squared battery in this game was fully justified, but only with his opponent's help.

25.♗h4 f6 26.♖e1! ♘b6 27.♕h3! ♔h8 (27...♕xe5? 28.♗g4 ♕c7 29.♗e6+ ♔h8 30.♗f5 with a win) 28.♗f1 is stronger.

25. ... ♘a4-b6
26. e5-e6! f7xe6
27. ♕f3-e4 ♗e7-f6?

27...♕f6 28.♗e3 ♕g6 29.♕xg6 hg would bring the players close to a draw. Now, however, the dark-squared bishop's brilliant manoeuvre destroys Black's defenses.

28. ♗d1-c2 g7-g6
29. ♕e4xe6+ ♔g8-g7
30. ♗f2-e3 ♘b6-d7
31. ♗e3-g5 ♕b2-d4+
32. ♔g1-h1 ♖d8-f8
33. ♗g5-e3 ♕d4-b2
34. ♕e6xd7+ ♖f8-f7
35. ♗e3-h6+!

1-0

The extremely exciting complications after 10.d5 contrast with the boring variations in the 10.♗e2 line. The move 10...♘b4 fails to inspire trust, while after 10...ed 11.cd ♘b4 chances are objectively equal. Hence the Four Pawns Attack creates problems for Black in practice but not in theory. If Black avoids risky setups such as 5...g5?! or 5...de 6.fe c5 7.d5 e6?!, then he can still choose from a wide selection of setups with a good reputation. We should agree with Hungarian theoreticians Krizsany and Videki: "The Four Pawns Attack requires that White prepares just as heavily as for the 4.♘f3 line, but it doesn't offer him any advantage at all."

Part 9
The Exchange System with 5...ed

Introduction

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6



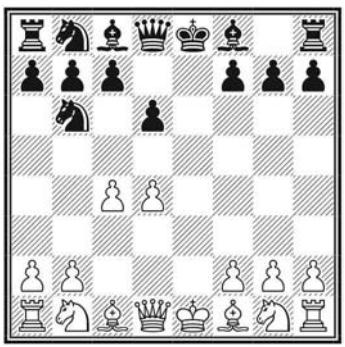
5. e5xd6 ...

White reduces tension in the center in order to switch to piece play and without having to deal with the d6xe5 exchange. Thanks to White's spatial advantage and the clumsy location of the knight on b6 he has somewhat better prospects in the battle. The quieter continuation 5...ed is reviewed in the current Chapter 9, while the capture with 5...cd and the asymmetry of the pawn chains are analyzed in parts 10 and 11.

While Alekhine Defense theory was first taking shape 5...♕xd6 was also tested. After 6.c5 ♕e6+ 7.♗e2 ♘d5 8.♘f3 the black knight returns to the center but the queen on e6 looks so ungainly that it's quite easy for White to gain an advantage. For example, 8...♕d7 9.0-0 e6 10.♘c3 ♗e7 11.♖e1 0-0 12.♘e5 ♕d8 13.♘xd5 ed 14.♗d3 ♗f6 15.♗f4 g6 16.♕d2 ♖e8 17.♗c2 ♗e6 18.b4 ♘d7?! (18...c6) 19.c6! ♘xe5 20.de ♗e7 (Michell – Flohr, Hastings 1935) 21.cb ♖b8 22.♗a4 ♗d7 23.♗b3 c6 24.e6 winning the exchange. In the 21st century serious players don't capture on d6 with the queen, as the reputation of this move has never been restored. After 8...g6 9.0-0 ♗g7 10.♖e1 ♕d7 11.♗c4 0-0 12.♗g5 h6 13.♘e5 ♗xe5 14.♖xe5 hg 15.♖xd5 ♕e6 16.♘d2 g4 (Vavra – Kovar, Brno 2005) 17.♖e5 ♕d7 18.♕c2 e6 19.♖e4 Black has to give up the pawn.

Chapter 43. Variations without ♘b1-c3

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**e5xd6**	**e7xd6**



Black avoids disturbing the symmetry of the pawn structures and opens the e-file on which major pieces will likely be swapped. White counts on exploiting his spatial advantage; Black's main plan is to block the d4 pawn with d6-d5 and then lay siege to it.

White usually plays ♘b1-c3 here, either immediately or slightly later. This chapter considers other continuations, either where the knight develops on d2 or where it eventually settles on c3, but without merging into the 6.♘c3 lines.

6. ♘g1-f3 ...

6.d5 is analyzed in Game 45. Zapata (Colombia 1997) and Torrado (Lisbon 2000) immediately surrendered the initiative to Tony Miles by playing 6.♗d3 ♘c6 7.♗e3 ♘b4 8.♗e2?! The second game continued: 8...♗f5 9.♘a3 ♗e7 10.♘f3 0-0 11.0-0 ♗f6 12.♕b3 a5 13.♖ac1 ♖e8 14.♖fe1 ♗d7 15.♘b5 d5 16.a3 dc 17.♗xc4 ♘xc4 18.♕xc4 ♗e6 19.♕f1 ♘d5 20.♘c3 ♘xc3 21.bc ♗e7 22.♖a1 ♕d5 – Black has the advantage with the bishop pair and the chance to put pressure on the a3 and c3 pawns. If 8.♘c3 then a good reply is 8...c6 9.d5 (otherwise the black pawn moves here) 9... ♗e7 10.♘ge2 0-0 11.0-0 ♖e8 and an exchange of bishops at the right time.

If 7.♘e2 then White nearly always follows up with ♘b1-c3, transposing to 6.♘c3 lines. Note that 7...♘b4 is also effective here, as is the 7...g6 fianchetto.

The following fragment demonstrates that even strong grandmasters often diverge from theory in the Alekhine Defense at the first opportunity. The game Inarkiev – Shimanov (Tyumen 2012) continued 6.h3 ♗e7 7.♘f3 ♗f6 8.♗e2 0-0 9.0-0 ♗e6 10.♕c2 d5 11.c5 ♘c8 12.b4 ♘c6 13.♕c3 a6 14.a4 ♘8e7 15.♗f4 ♘g6 16.♗h2 ♖e8 17.♖e1 ♘ce7 18.♘bd2 (finally!) 18...h6 19.♘b3 ♘f5 20.b5 ab 21.ab c6 22.♖xa8 ♕xa8 23.♖a1 ♕c8 24.♖a7 – and Black stubbornly rejected ♗e6-f5, after

which he found himself in a tough position.

6. ... ♗f8-e7

6...♘c6 allows White to advance his central pawn with tempo. Various modifications of d4-d5 are analyzed together in Game 46.

7. ♗f1-e2 0-0
8. 0-0 ♗c8-g4
9. b2-b3 ...

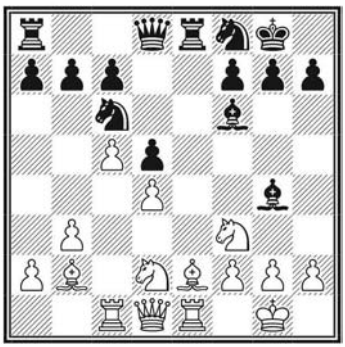
Perez Candelario versus Korneev (Spain 2003) made a knight manoeuvre that is atypical of the Alekhine Defense: 9.♘bd2 ♖e8 10.h3 ♗h5 11.♖e1 ♗f6 12.g4 ♗g6 13.♘f1 h6 14.♘e3?! c5 (if 14.♗e3 then it's not such a strong move) 15.d5 ♘8d7 16.♕b3 ♗d4 17.a4, and after 17...♗e4 18.♘g2 ♗xf3 19.♕xf3 ♘e5 20.♕b3 ♕f6 the rook is forced to return to f1.

In the game Khader – Neverov (Abu Dhabi 2006) Black deservedly came out worse after: 9.♗e3 ♗f6 10.♘bd2 ♖e8 11.♖e1 c6 12.♕c2 d5 13.c5 ♘6d7 14.♗d3 ♘f8 15.♗f4 ♖xe1+ 16.♖xe1 ♗xf3 17.♘xf3 ♘bd7 18.♗f5 g6 19.♗h3 ♗g7. The truth is that c7-c6 and d6-d5 not only strengthen the pawn chain, they at the same time weaken the dark squares.

9. ... ♗e7-f6
10. ♗c1-b2 ♘b8-c6
11. ♘b1-d2 ...

11.♘a3 doesn't fundamentally change anything: 11...d5 12.c5 ♘d7 13.♕d2 ♖e8 14.♖fe1 ♘f8 15.♘c2 ♘e6 with pressure on d4.

11. ... ♖f8-e8
12. ♖f1-e1 d6-d5
13. c4-c5 ♘b6-d7
14. ♖a1-c1 ♘d7-f8



Now White has to worry about achieving equality. After 15.h3 ♗h5 16.♗b5 ♘e6 17.♗xc6 bc 18.♕e2 ♗g5 19.g4 ♗g6 20.♘xg5 ♘xg5 21.♕xe8+ ♕xe8 22.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 (Dzhumadullayev – Barsov, Istanbul 2012) the black pieces are much more active and even the presence of opposite-colored bishops is insufficient to save White. The continuation 15.♘e5 ♗xe2 16.♖xe2 ♗xe5 17.de ♘b4 18.♖c3 ♘xa2 19.♖g3 ♘e6 20.♘f3 ♘b4 21.♘d4 ♘c6 22.♘f5 d4 (with no compensation for the pawn) was seen in the world under 12 championship (Heraklion 2002) between an Indonesian with the long surname Susilodinata and a Norwegian named Magnus Carlsen, who at the time was equally unknown but who demonstrated that even at such a tender age he had the ability of a master.

Game 45
E.Berg – E.Rozentalis
Gothenburg 2013

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**e5xd6**	**e7xd6**
6.	**d4-d5**	**...**



White extends his spatial advantage at the cost of weakening his dark squares. They will be useful for Black's queen's knight whose c6 square has been confiscated.

6. ... ♗f8-e7

If 6...♗f5 7.♗d3 ♗xd3 8.♕xd3 ♘8d7 9.♘f3 ♘c5 10.♕e2+ ♗e7 11.♗e3 0-0 12.0-0 ♖e8 then Black's position can only be strengthened if the knight sits on b6, but this can be fixed.

7. ♗f1-d3 ...

If 7.♗e2 0-0 8.♘f3, then 8... ♗g4, planning the principally advantageous exchange of bishop for knight (while also threatening White's pawn on c4). Therefore, prophylactic play is called for: 8.h3 ♗g5 (8...♗f6!?) 9.♘d2 ♗f5 10.♘gf3 ♗f6 11.0-0 ♘8d7 12.♘b3 (Szieberth – D.Majer, Budapest 1997), and after 12...♘e5?! 13.♘fd4 Black had to reject 13...♗g6? due to 14.f4 ♘exc4 15.♗xc4 ♘xc4 16.f5. On the other hand, if 12...♖e8 13.♖e1 ♘e5 14.♘fd4 ♗g6 15.f4 then 15...♘d3 works.

7. ... ♘b8-d7

In the line 7...c6 8.♘c3 cd 9.cd the two symmetrical chains have morphed into three symmetric 'islands'. Note that this position is usually reached via the asymmetrical variation 5...cd 6.d5 e6 7.♘c3 ed 8.cd ♗e7 9.♗d3. After 9...0-0 10.♘ge2 ♘8d7 11.0-0 ♖e8 12.♗e3 ♘e5 13.♗c2 ♗g4 14.f3 ♗h5 15.b3 ♖c8 16.♖c1 ♗g5 17.♗xg5 ♕xg5 18.f4 ♕h6 19.♕d4?? ♗xe2 20.♘xe2 ♘g4 21.h3 ♘e3 22.♗e4 ♘xf1 23.♖xf1 ♕h4 (Berzinsh – Liardet, Geneve 2003) Black is the exchange up with a winning position (although the Swiss master somehow managed to lose the game). White should have played 19.fe ♕e3+ 20.♖f2 ♖xc3 21.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 22.♖xc3 ♕xc3 23.♘xc3 ♗xd1 24.♘xd1 ♖xe5 25.♖xf7 with a likely draw in the rook ending. The advance of the a-pawn ensures White a microscopic advantage: 10.a4 ♘a6 11.a5 ♘d7 12.♘ge2 ♘dc5 13.♗b1 ♗g4 14.0-0 ♕d7 15.♕c2 g6 16.♗h6 (Pap – Pirrot, Bad Woerishofen 2014) 16...♖fe8 17.♘d4 ♗f6 18.♕d2 ♕d8.

8. ♘g1-e2 ...

Further, Black develops some activity on the kingside, but if necessary can switch his focus to the queenside – 8.♘f3 ♘c5 9.0-0 0-0 10.♗e3 ♘ba4!? 11.♘c3 ♘xb2 12.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 13.♕c2+ ♘bd3 14.♗xc5 ♗f5 15.♗d4 ♕d7 with equal chances. Black should have no problems in this position.

8. ... ♘d7-e5

9. h2-h3 0-0

Here (and also on the next move) it is simplest of all for Black to exchange the knight on e5 for the bishop and bring his 'bad' knight on b6 to the center. And this is what Arvidsson did versus Berg (Vasteras 2014): 9...♘xd3 10.♕xd3 ♘d7 11.0-0 ♘e5 12.♕c2 0-0 13.♗e3 ♗f6 14.♘d4 ♗d7 15.♘d2 ♕c8 16.♘e4 ♗e7?! (16...♕d8!?) 17.f4 ♘g6? (he should have sought salvation with 17...f5 18.fe de 19.♘f3 fe 20.♘xe5) 18.f5 ♘e5 19.f6! ♗xf6 20.♖xf6! gf 21.♘xf6+ ♔g7 22.♕xh7+! ♔xf6 23.♕h4+ ♔g7 24.♗h6+ and mate will follow. The opening was not the reason why Black played passively and was then swept aside by a crushing attack. A fine move would have been 14...c5!? 15.dc bc, and after c6-c5 the queen's bishop occupies the long diagonal.

10. b2-b3 ♗e7-g5

11. ♗d3-c2 ♗g5xc1

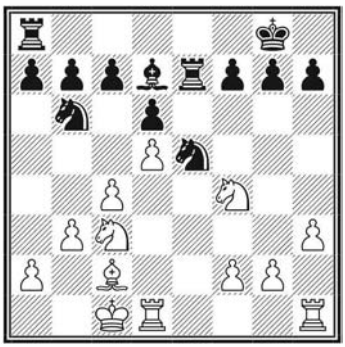
12. ♕d1xc1 ♕d8-h4

13. ♘b1-c3 ♗c8-d7

14. ♕c1-f4 ♕h4xf4

15. ♘e2xf4 ♖f8-e8

16. 0-0-0 ♖e8-e7



17. c4-c5!? ...

The Swedish Grandmaster spotted a hidden tactic: giving up a couple of pawns he wins the exchange. On the other hand, the black pawns are not that weak, so White needed to consider the ♘f4-e2-d4 manoeuvre.

17. ... d6xc5

18. d5-d6 c7xd6

19. ♘c3-d5 ♘b6xd5

20. ♘f4xd5 ♖e7-e6

21. ♘d5-c7 ♖a8-d8

22. ♘c7xe6 ♗d7xe6

23. ♗c2-e4 ♘e5-c6

Even the apparently dangerous continuation 23...d5 24.f4 f5 25.♗xd5 ♗xd5 26.fe ♔f7 is sufficient for a draw. Black has a potential passed pawn on both flanks, while he can get out of the pin if needs be.

24. ♖h1-e1 g7-g6

25. ♗e4xc6 b7xc6

26. ♖e1-e4 h7-h5

In the line 26...♗d5!? 27.♖a4 ♗xg2 28.♖xa7 ♗xh3 29.a4 ♗g2

30.a5 h5 31.♖g1 ♗d5 32.a6 h4 33.♖b7 ♖a8 34.a7 ♔g7 White needs to call on the clumsy 35.♖g4 h3 36.♖h4 in order to stop the passed h-pawn. 27.♖g4 h5 28.♖g3 is more careful, but the a7 pawn is then in danger.

27.	**♖e4-a4**	**♖d8-d7**
28.	**h3-h4**	**♔g8-g7**
29.	**♔c1-d2**	**♔g7-f6**
30.	**♖d1-e1**	**♖d7-b7**
31.	**f2-f3**	**c5-c4!**

31.♖a6 ♗d5 32.f3 would prevent the pawn from moving. In which case Black should maintain equality with waiting manoeuvres.

32.	**b3-b4**	**♗e6-d7**
33.	**a2-a3**	**c6-c5**
34.	**♖a4-a6**	**c5xb4**
35.	**a3xb4**	**♖b7xb4**
36.	**♖a6xd6+**	**♗d7-e6**
37.	**♖e1-c1**	**a7-a5**
38.	**♖d6-a6**	**a5-a4**
39.	**♖a6-a5**	**c4-c3+**
40.	**♖c1xc3**	**♖b4xh4**
41.	**♔d2-e3**	**♖h4-b4**

½ - ½

Game 46

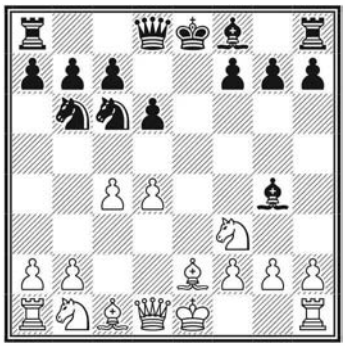
S.Grishchenko – A.Shishkin

Lipetsk 2008

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6 2.**
e4-e5		**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**e5xd6**	**e7xd6**
6.	**♘g1-f3**	**♘b8-c6**
7.	**♗f1-e2**	**...**

The line 7.d5 ♘e5 8.♘xe5 de has not been sufficiently tested. The pawn structure has lost its symmetry and each player attempts to be the first to convert their pawn majority on their respective flanks.

7. ... ♗c8-g4



At this point the number of games in the database increases sharply – above all due to the continuation 4.♘f3 ♗g4 5.♗e2 ♘c6 6.c4 ♘b6 7.ed ed (which was the actual move order in the main game that we are analyzing here). However, here the majority has to submit to the will of the minority, as play here totally resembles that of the exchange variation and can merge straight into it after ♘b1-c3.

8. d4-d5 ...

For some reason certain Grandmasters have advanced the white pawn after a dubious intermediate move: 8.♘bd2 ♗e7. 9.d5 ♗xf3 10.♘xf3 ♘e5 11.♘xe5 de 12.♕b3 0-0 13.♗e3 ♘d7 14.0-0 b6 15.♖ad1 ♗d6 16.♕c3 ♕e7 17.a3

a5 and White has no active plan available (Hernandez – Pogorelov, Cordoba 1995). Or 9...♘b8 10.♘f1 0-0 11.♘e3 ♗xf3 12.♗xf3 ♗g5 13.♕c2 a5 14.h4 ♗f4 (14...♗xe3 15.♗xe3 ♖e8 would make the pawn charge questionable) 15.♗e4 h5 16.g3 ♗h6 17.♗d2 ♘a6 18.0-0 ♘c5 19.♗g2 g6 20.♖ae1 ♗g7 21.b3 ♘bd7 with good play (Kasimdzhanov – Avrukh, Spain 2008).

Another version of advancing the central pawn was: 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♘bd2 0-0 10.d5. Malbran's smart moves versus Campora (San Luis 2006) opened up the position and led to complete equality: 10...♗xf3 11.♘xf3 ♘e5 12.♘d2 c6 13.dc ♘xc6 14.♘f3 d5 15.cd ♕xd5 16.♕xd5 ♘xd5 17.♖d1 ♖fd8 18.♖b1 ♘db4 19.a3 ♖xd1+ 20.♗xd1 ♘d5.

8. ... ♗g4xf3

9. ♗e2xf3 ...

9.gf?! brings an insignificant advantage from opening the g-file and winning a tempo, but more significant costs from creating permanently weak pawns. For example, 9...♘e5 10.f4 ♘ed7 11.♕d4 ♕f6 12.♗e3 ♕xd4 13.♗xd4 0-0-0 14.♘c3 ♖g8 15.♔d2 g6 16.♘e4 (Sobolevsky – V.Sergeev, Bratislava 1996) 16...♖e8 17.♘g5 h6 18.♘xf7 ♖e4! (leading to an exchange that plays into Black's hands) 19.♗e3 ♖e7 20.♗xb6 ab 21.♗g4 ♖xf7 22.♗e6 ♖gg7 23.♗xf7 ♖xf7, and the knight rampaging across enemy lines forced White to lose two pieces for a rook.

9. ... ♘c6-e5

10. ♗f3-e2 ♗f8-e7

10...♕h4 11.0-0 h5 12.♘d2 g6 13.f4 ♘g4 14.♘f3 ♕f6 15.♖e1 0-0-0 16.a4 is overly impulsive (Karpov – Alburt, Malta 1980). Black's 'attack' has run out of steam, whereas White's attack is only just beginning.

11. f2-f4 ...

This is a big decision, as the pawn has no way back and it will no longer defend vulnerable squares. An obvious example is Nevostrujev – Yankin (Novokuznetsk 2003): 11.♘c3 0-0 12.b3 f5 13.f4 ♘ed7 14.♗e3 ♗f6 15.♕d2 ♘c5 16.0-0?! ♘e4 17.♘xe4 ♗xa1 18.♘xd6 cd 19.♖xa1 ♘d7 20.b4 b6. The bishops witnessed White's capitulation without playing a full part in the game. Although the reason for this is obviously not f2-f4 itself, but White's reckless exchange sac (instead of the acceptable 16.♗xc5 dc 17.0-0-0).

Objectively, White has no advantage. The smart transfer of the queen's rook to the kingside undertaken by Rendle versus Williams (Hastings 2010) is no exception: 11.0-0 0-0 12.♕c2 ♗f6 13.a4 a5 14.♖a3 ♖e8 15.♖h3 g6 16.♘d2, and here Black should have continued 16...♘ed7 17.♗g4 ♘c5.

11. ... ♘e5-g6

12. 0-0 0-0

13. ♘b1-c3 ♘b6-d7

In manoeuvring lines of the

Alekhine Defense it makes sense to bring the knight on b6 back into play if there are no obviously better continuations. If ♖f8-e8 and ♗e7-f6 are at all better then not by much, while the knight manoeuvre is definitely a good one.

14. ♗c1-e3 a7-a5
15. ♗e2-d3 ♘d7-c5
16. ♗d3-c2 ...

We are surprised that Houdini prefers 16.♗xc5 dc 17.♕b3, as after 17...♗f6 White still cannot capture on b7.

16. ... ♗e7-f6
17. ♕d1-d2 ♕d8-d7
18. ♖a1-e1 ♖f8-e8
19. b2-b3 ♖e8-e7
20. a2-a3 ♖a8-e8
21. b3-b4 a5xb4
22. a3xb4 ♗f6xc3
23. ♕d2xc3 ♘c5-e4
24. ♕c3-d4 ♘g6-h4
25. ♗e3-f2 ♘h4-f5

The mass exchanges after 25...♘xf2 26.♕xf2 ♘g6 27.g3 ♖xe1 28.♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 29.♕xe1 ♘f8 would lead to safe positions for both players, but Black had decided that it was too early to drain the vital juices from the game.

26. ♕d4-a7 ♕d8-c8
27. ♖e1-e2 ♘e4-c3?!

The knight moves from a strong square to a quite unstable one. 27...c6 was much better.

28. ♖e2xe7 ♘f5xe7
29. ♕a7-e3? ...

After 29.♖e1 ♘g6 30.f5 ♘f8 31.♕a1! ♘e2+ 32.♔f1 ♘f4 33.♕d1 or 30...♘f4 31.g3 ♖xe1+ 32.♗xe1 ♕e8 33.♗d2 ♘fe2+ 34.♔f1 Black would be in trouble. However, Grishchenko undoes his good work by provoking his opponent to win a pawn in the hope of capturing his knight. The only problem is that the knight has no intension of being eaten!

29. ... ♘e7xd5!
30. ♕e3-d3 ♘c3-e2+
31. ♔g1-h1 ♘d5-f6
32. ♗f2-e3 ♕c8-e6
33. ♖f1-f3 g7-g6?!

If 33...♘g4! 34.♕xh7+ ♔f8 35.♕h8+ ♔e7 36.♕h4+ ♔d7 the black king would head for a safe haven and Black's advantageously positioned pieces would soon prove decisive.

34. f4-f5? ...

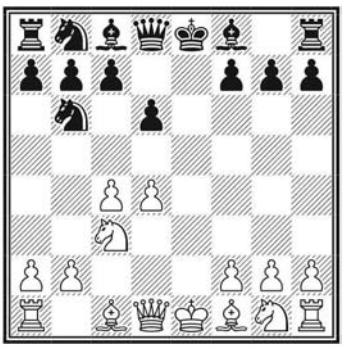
Time trouble was clearly influencing play. The correct move was 34.h3 with the dual aim of preventing the knight from getting to g4 and also opening a necessary escape hole. After 34...d5! 35.cd ♕a6! 36.b5 ♕a1+ 37.♔h2 ♕e1 the position is unclear.

34. ... ♕e6-e5
35. ♕d3xe2 ♘f6-g4
36. ♖f3-g3 ♘g4xe3
0-1

There is no need to hold back in playing ♘b1-c3, and all the more so in rejecting this natural development of the knight. ♘b1-d2 is too passive, while Black can easily deal with an early d4-d5.

Chapter 44. Various replies to 6.♘c3

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
5. e5xd6 e7xd6
6. ♘b1-c3 ...



6. ... g7-g6

This chapter is mostly devoted to this fianchetto – which can be treated as a fully separate variation of 5...ed. Zoltan Varga (versus Bokros, Budapest 2001) continued in his own typical fashion 6...c6 7.♗d3 ♘a6 8.a3 ♘c7 9.h3 ♗e6 10.♕e2 ♗e7 11.♘f3 0-0 12.0-0 ♖e8 13.b3 d5 14.c5 ♘d7 15.♕c2 ♘f8 16.♗f4 f6. Black even managed to win, although from a theoretical point of view we do not recommend this overly defensive concept.

After 6...♘c6 Black nearly always continues ♗f8-e7 (see the following chapters for the variations), unless White plays 7.d5. After 7...♘e5 8.f4 ♘ed7 9.♘f3 ♗e7 10.♗d3 ♗h4+ 11.♘xh4 ♕xh4+ 12.g3 ♕e7+ 13.♔f2 0-0 14.♗e3 White has a stable advantage, but it is worth considering 8...♘g6!? (and if ♘g1-f3 then ♘g6-h4).

In reply to 6...♗f5 it is easiest for White to achieve a small advantage via 7.♗d3 ♗xd3 8.♕xd3. The sortie 7.♕f3 is most often met by the rather lame 7...♕c8?! If, for example, play continues 8.♗e3 c5 9.dc dc 10.♕g3 f6 (Asis Gargatagli – Kallio, Andorra 2005) 11.♘b5 ♘a6 12.♖d1 ♔f7 then even though Black manages to castle by hand he has not achieved equality. On the other hand, 7...g6!? has yet to be tested: White cannot take on b7 due to 8...c6.

7. ♘g1-f3 ...

The setup from the Voronezh Variation, the move 5...cd that is firmly established in theory, has not been successful against 5...ed. After 7.♗e3 ♗g7 8.♖c1 0-0 9.b3 ♘c6 10.d5 Black has available the excellent e7 square, which probably ensures him an advantage. 7.♗d3 is analyzed in Game 47.

7. ... ♗c8-g4

Caution! After 7...♗g7?! 8.♗g5 the black pieces lose their coordination and the c4-c5 breakthrough gives White a close to decisive advantage. For example, 8...♕d7 9.c5! ♕e6+ 10.♔d2! ♘c4+ 11.♗xc4 ♕xc4 12.b3 ♕a6 13.♖e1+

♔f8 14.♘d5 or 8...f6 9.♗e3 0-0 10.c5 ♘6d7 11.♗c4+ ♔h8 12.h4! dc 13.h5! gh (Franzen – Knezevic, Stary Smokovec 1981) 14.dc ♖e8 15.♕d5 f5 16.0-0-0.

8. h2-h3 ...

If 8.♗e2 ♗g7 9.♗g5 ♕d7 the queen lets the bishop go first and Black's position isn't that bad. That said, after 10.0-0 0-0 11.c5 dc 12.dc ♕xd1 13.♖axd1 ♗xc3 (with the idea of 14.bc? ♘a4) 14.cb ♗a5 15.bc ♗xc7 Black still has to fight for equality.

The moves played by Stukopin in his game versus Prokopchuk (Moscow 2013) were somewhat naive: 8.♕e2+ ♕e7 9.♘e4 ♗xf3 10.gf h6 11.♘f6+ ♔d8 12.♘e4 f5 13.♘c3 ♕xe2+ 14.♗xe2 ♘c6 15.♗e3 f4! 16.♗xf4 ♘xd4 17.♖c1 ♗g7. Black's loss of the right to castle is insignificant, while his centralized knight and better pawn structure look good.

8. ... ♗g4xf3

In his game with Antipov (Moscow 2013) Prokopchuk created a backward pawn in his enemy camp: 8...♕e7+ 9.♗e3 ♗xf3 10.♕xf3 ♗h6 11.0-0-0 ♗xe3+ 12.♕xe3 ♕xe3+ 13.fe c6 14.g4 ♘8d7 15.b3 0-0-0 16.♗g2 ♔c7 17.♖hf1 ♖hf8 18.♖f2 f6 19.♔d2 ♖f7 20.♖df1. The black pieces are very passive and cannot cope with this chronic weakness.

9. ♕d1xf3 ♘b8-c6

Once again, he cannot complete the fianchetto: 9...♗g7? 10.c5! dc 11.dc ♘6d7 12.♕xb7 ♗xc3+ 13.bc ♕f6 (Kaminski – Oliwa, Poland 1996) 14.♗d2, and White captures the rook without loss.

10. ♗c1-e3 ♗f8-g7

11. 0-0-0 ...

After 11.♖d1 ♕f6 12.♕xf6 ♗xf6 13.c5 dc 14.dc ♗xc3+ 15.bc ♘d7 16.♗c4 ♘de5 17.♗d5 0-0-0 18.f4 ♘e7 19.♗b3 ♘d3+ 20.♔e2 ♘f5 21.♖hg1 ♖he8 22.♖xd3 ♖xd3 23.♔xd3 ♖xe3+ 24.♔d2 ♖e7 25.♖e1 ♔d8 26.♖xe7 ♔xe7 (♖aetsky – Chetverik, Voronezh 1986) the players agreed a draw in a somewhat better position for Black. If 17.♗b3 ♘a5 18.0-0 ♘xb3 19.ab the white pawns don't look so bad and a draw is a fairly good outcome for Black.

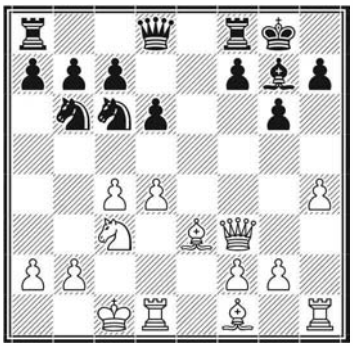
11. ... 0-0

Here the exchange of queens is even less conducive to gaining equality. Moreover, if 11...♕f6 12.♕xf6 ♗xf6 13.c5 dc 14.dc ♗xc3 White has a pleasant choice between 15.cb ♗e5 16.bc ♗xc7 17.♗h6 ♖d8 18.♖e1+ ♔d7 19.♗c4 ♘e5 20.♗b5+ ♘c6 21.♗g7 ♖he8 22.♗f6 ♖xe1+ 23.♖xe1 (Petr – Kopal, Czech Republic 2006) and the more precise 15.bc ♘d7 16.♗c4 f6 17.♗f7+! ♔e7 18.♗d5 (Secer – Chigladze, Izmir 2009).

12. h3-h4 ...

Diargam

White goes for decisive action while Black lacks counterplay and can only hope that his opponent





makes an error. For example 12... h6 13.h5 g5 14.c5 ♘c8 15.♗c4 (15.♗a6!?) 15...♘8e7? 16.♗xg5! hg 17.h6 ♘d4 18.♕e4 (Jepson – Westerinen, Gothenburg 1998) or 12...♕f6 13.♕h3 ♖fe8 14.h5 ♘a5 15.hg hg 16.♕h7+ ♔f8 17.♖h3 (Tomczak – V.Sergeev, Legnica 2011) 17...♘axc4 18.♗xc4 ♘xc4 19.♘d5 ♕f5 20.♗h6 ♕xd5 21.♕xg7+ ♔e7 22.♖f3.

Game 46

A.Shirov – R.Appel

Germany 2013

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**e5xd6**	**e7xd6**
6.	**♘b1-c3**	**g7-g6**
7.	**♗f1-d3**	**...**

Usually (and as was actually the case in this game too) Black goes for a fianchetto after 6.♗d3. With the reverse order of moves the point of this bishop move is questionable.

7.	**...**	**♗f8-g7**
8.	**♘g1-e2**	**♘b8-c6**
9.	**♗c1-e3**	**0-0**
10.	**0-0**	**...**

Occasionally White waits to castle: 10.b3 ♘e7 11.♕d2 ♗f5 12.♘g3 ♗xd3 13.♕xd3 d5 14.c5 ♘d7 15.0-0 b6 16.cb ab 17.♗g5 c6 18.♖fe1 ♖e8 (Naiditsch – Chigladze, Baku 2007). The Georgian master, a big fan of 6...g6, managed to gain full equality against the best chess player in Germany.

10. ... ♘c6-b4

In order to prepare d6-d5 the knight is sometimes transferred to e7. 10...♖e8 is also played, which is probably good for Black. The crossing of the demarcation line led to simplifications and a quick draw between Lopez Martinez and Nogueiras (Santa Clara 2009): 11.d5 ♘e5 12.b3 ♘xd3 13.♕xd3 ♘d7 14.♕d2 ♘c5 15.♘g3 a5 16.♖ae1 ♗d7 17.♗d4 ♕h4 18.♗xg7 ♔xg7 19.f4 f5 20.♘ge2 ♖e7.

11. b2-b3 c7-c6

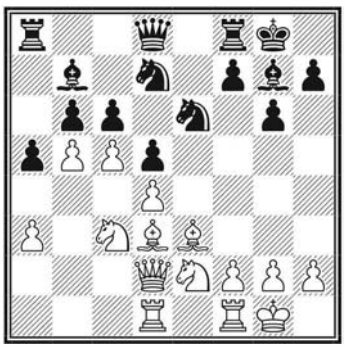
The natural continuation would

be an exchange on d3 and only then c7-c6 and d7-d5. However, Appel lets the bishop live and is ready to retreat his knight. And he also puts up good resistance to his opponent's queenside attack.

12. ♗d3-b1 d6-d5
13. c4-c5 ♘b6-d7
14. a2-a3 ♘b4-a6
15. b3-b4 ♘a6-c7
16. ♗b1-d3 ♘c7-e6
17. ♕d1-d2 b7-b6

This is forced, as the c8-h3 diagonal has rather a lot of knights on it while Black still needs to complete his development.

18. ♖a1-d1 a7-a5
19. b4-b5 ♗c8-b7



20. ♘c3xd5!? ...

Shirov does all he can to unbalance the game. If 20.cb cb 21.♘xb5 ♘xb6 the black knight aims for c4, while its exchange will open up the light-squared bishop. Now, however, a desire to maintain symmetry with 20...cd 21.c6 ♗c8 22.cd ♗xd7 will leave the bishop passively placed.

20. ... b6xc5
21. b5xc6 ♗b7xc6
22. ♗d3-e4 ♗c6-a4

In both the game and Houdini variations (for example, 22... ♖c8 23.♘dc3 cd 24.♘xd4 ♗xd4 25.♗xd4 ♘xd4 26.♕xd4 ♕f6 27.♗xc6 ♕xd4 28.♖xd4 ♖xc6) a tornado descends, sweeping an equal number of black and white pieces off the board. And this is followed by calm weather and a draw.

23. ♖d1-c1 c5xd4
24. ♘e2xd4 ♘d7-c5
25. ♘d4xe6 ♘c5xe4
26. ♘e6xd8 ♘e4xd2
27. ♗e3xd2 ♖f8xd8
28. ♘d5-b6 ♗a6-b5
29. ♖f1-d1 ♖a8-b8
30. ♗d2xa5 ♗g7-b2
31. ♖d1xd8+ ♖b8xd8
32. ♖c1-b1 ♗b2xa3
33. ♘b6-c4 ♖d8-d3
34. ♘c4-e5 ♖d3-d5
35. ♘e5-g4 ♗a3-b2!?

Given the weak first rank 35... ♖d3 would have been useful, but returning the bishop to the long diagonal is visually more elegant.

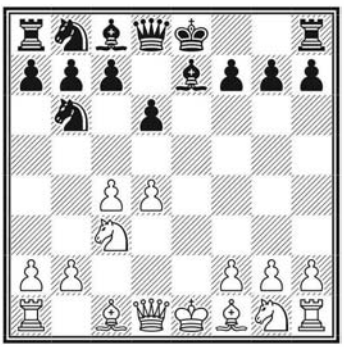
36. h2-h3 ♗b5-d3
37. ♖b1xb2 ♖d5xa5
½ - ½

The plan with 6...g6 is clearly unreliable. After 7.♘f3 ♗g4 8.h3 ♗xf3 9.♕xf3 Black is forced to defend a difficult position without queens, or else to face an attack.

Chapter 45. 6.♘c3 ♗e7 7.♕f3

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
5. e5xd6 e7xd6
6. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-e7

After castling Black plans to attack the d4 pawn with his bishop on f6.



7. ♕d1-f3 ...

The plan with castling long should be considered relatively new in the theory of the Alekhine Defense. It was first played by Korchnoi versus Miles (Biel 1992). The continuation 7.♘f3 is the subject of Chapter 46, while 7.h3 is analyzed in Chapter 47 and 7.♗d3, in Chapter 48.

7. ... ♘b8-c6

The strategy of simplifying the game is best served by 7...♕d7!?, planning both ♕d7-g4 or ♘b6-a4. After 8.♗e3 ♕g4 9.♗d3 c6 10.h3 ♕xf3 11.♘xf3 ♗e6 12.♘d2 0-0 or 8...♘a4 9.♘d5 0-0 10.b3 ♘b6 11.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 12.♗d3 ♘8d7 13.♘h3 ♕f6 14.♕e4 ♕g6 (this desire to swap is similar to playing 8...♕g4) 15.♕xg6 hg 16.f3 ♖e8 17.♔d2 ♘f8 (Saltaev – Marinkovic, Ikaria 1994) Black is close to equality.

If 7...0-0 8.♗e3 the number of games increases due to those with the move order 7.♗e3 0-0 8.♕f3. In that case, apart from 8...♘c6 (transposing to the main line) other good alternatives are 8...♗g5 and 8...c6. In the short game Yudin – B.Savchenko (Saratov 2006) after 8...♗g5 9.♘h3 ♗xe3 10.fe ♕e8 11.♘f4 ♘c6 12.♔f2 f5 13.h4 ♗d7 14.h5 ♕e7, the strong master (and future Grandmaster) mistakenly sacked his knight: 15.♘g6? hg 16.hg ♕g5 17.c5 f4! 18.cb fe+ 19.♔g1 ♖xf3 20.♗c4+, and White resigned without waiting for the king to return safely to the center. Instead he should have first played 15.c5 dc and only then 16.♘g6!? ♕g5 17.♘xf8 ♖xf8 18.dc f4 19.♘e4 ♕e5 20.♔g1 ♘d5 with major complications.

In reply to 8...c6 castling on opposite sides plays to Black's advantage: 9.0-0-0?! d5 10.c5 ♘6d7 11.♗d3 b6 12.cb ab 13.♗b1 ♘f6 14.h3 b5 15.g4 b4 16.♘ce2 (Vachier-Lagrave – Bogut, Turin 2006) 16...♖e8 17.♘g3 g6 18.g5 ♘fd7 19.h4 ♘f8 – the king is

defended by a minimum of forces and counterattack is on the agenda. White should prefer 9.♗d3 d5 10.cd ♘xd5 11.♘xd5 cd 12.♘e2 ♗b4+ 13.♘c3 ♗xc3+ 14.bc ♗e6 15.0-0 ♘d7 16.a4 with a minimal advantage (Gamback – Solozhenkin, Jyvaskyla 1998).

8. ♗c1-e3 0-0

8...♗e6!? is interesting, so that after 9.b3 d5 10.c5 ♘d7 (or c8) Black fixes a structure that is best avoided by White if he castles long. The game Shanava – Ara Minasian (Batumi 2001) continued 9.d5 ♘e5 10.♕e4 f5 11.♕d4 c5! 12.♕d1 ♗d7 13.b3 0-0 14.♘f3 ♗f6 15.♘xe5 ♗xe5 16.♕c2 ♕f6 17.♗d2 ♗d4 18.0-0-0 ♗xf2 and Black was a full pawn ahead. ♘or does White cause Black any problems with: 12.dc bc 13.b3 ♗f6 14.♕d2 0-0 15.♖d1 ♖e8! (16.♕xd6?! ♕xd6 17.♖xd6 ♘exc4!).

9. 0-0-0 ...

Caution! White mustn't lose sight of the c2 square, which has been weakened by his queen's early development. 9.c5? is no good due to 9...dc 10.dc ♘b4! Note that two master-level players continued 9...♘d7?! with the black pieces here.

9. ... ♗c8-e6

The game Korchnoi – Miles referred to earlier continued 9...f5!? 10.g3 f4? (the correct continuation was 10...♗e6 11.b3 ♗f6, planning a7-a5-a4) 11.gf ♗f5 12.c5 ♘d7 13.♗h3 ♔h8 14.d5 ♘cb8 15.cd cd 16.♗xf5 ♖xf5 17.♘ge2 ♖f7 18.♖hg1 – the pawn sacrifice only served to compromise Black's position. The principled continuation was seen in the game Berg versus Luther (Malmo 2002): 10.c5 f4! 11.cb fe 12.bc ♕xc7 13.♕d5+ ♔h8 14.fe ♗f5 15.♘f3 ♘b4 16.♕c4 ♕xc4 17.♗xc4 ♖ac8 18.♗e2 ♘xa2+ 19.♔d2 ♘b4 and Black had somewhat better chances thanks to the bishop pair. In reply to 13.♕xe3 Cox demonstrates the following variation: 13...♘b4 14.♔d2 ♖xf2+ 15.♕xf2 ♗g5+ 16.♔e1 ♕e7+ 17.♗e2 ♘c2+, although with 14...♗f5 15.♖c1 ♖ac8 Black can play for a win.

If 9...♗g5!? White probably needs to accept that his f2 pawn will shift to e3. For example, 10.♗d3 ♗xe3+ 11.fe ♘b4 12.e4?! ♗e6 13.d5 ♕g5+ 14.♔b1 ♗g4 15.♕g3 ♕g6 16.♘ge2 ♗xe2 17.♗xe2 ♕xg3 18.hg ♘d7 19.♘b5 ♘a6 20.a3 ♖fe8 21.♗f3 ♖e7 22.b4 ♘f6 23.♖he1 ♖ae8 (Odnorozhenko – V.Sergeev, Kiev 2006). Black reached a pleasant endgame, but he also had two opportunities to use his f-pawn to charge the enemy pawn chain – 12...f5!? 13.e5 de 14.de ♘d7, or 16...♘xd3 17.♕xd3 f5.

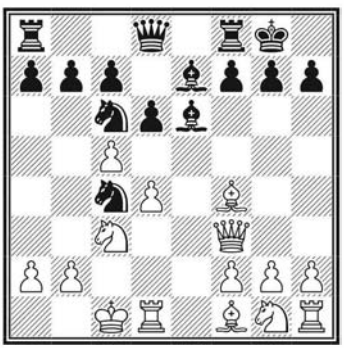
10. c4-c5 ...

There is no alternative. If 10.d5 ♘e5 11.♕e4 ♗g4 12.f3 ♗h5 the bishops on f6 and g6 start to strafe the white camp. Or 10.b3 a5 11.a4 d5 12.c5 ♘c8 13.♘ge2 (Chernyshov – Zelcic, Croatia 2004) 13...b6 14.cb cb 15.♘f4 ♘b4 with a better located army, including the king.

10. ... ♘b6-c4

In reply to 10...♘d7!? White most often plays 11.h3, which also meets Houdini's approval. The point of this mysterious prophylactic move is that Black plans 11...dc 12.dc ♕c8 and then occupying the important e5 and g4 squares. Another interesting continuation is 11.d5 ♘ce5 12.♕e2 ♗f5 13.h3 ♘xc5 14.♗xc5 ♘d3+!? 15.♗xd3 ♗xd3 16.♕xd3 dc – the computer finds this good for Black but we think the jury is still out!

11. ♗e3-f4 ...



If 11...dc? 12.d5 ♘d4 13.de fe 14.♗xc4 ♖xf4? 15.♕e3 ♕f8 16.♘h3 (Caruana – Genocchio, Italy 2007) or 14...♘xf3 15.♖xd8 ♖axd8 (B.Savchenko – Sek, Ulan Ude 2009) 16.♗xe6+ ♔h8 17.♗xc7 ♗g5+ 18.♔b1 ♘d2+ 19.♔c2 Black has no compensation for the material. In the game S.Petrosian – Jugelt (Hamburg 2011) Black started along the right path: 11...g5!? (to chase the white pieces from good squares) 12.d5 ♘6e5 13.♕g3 ♗g4 14.♗xe5 ♘xe5 15.♗e2 f5 16.♗xg4, but instead of the natural 16...♘xg4 he lost balance by capturing the knight with the pawn.

This line contrasts sharply with 6...g6 – the setup ♕d1-f3, ♗c1-e3, 0-0-0 can be met with several solid lines for Black. It's virtually impossible for White to play against any particular weakness, while Black's extra tempo gives him chances to do the same.

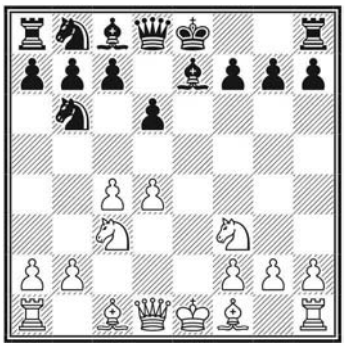
Chapter 46. 6.♘c3 ♗e7 7.♘f3

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**e5xd6**	**e7xd6**
6.	**♘b1-c3**	**♗f8-e7**
7.	**♘g1-f3**	**...**

Diagram

7. ... 0-0

If Black plays the immediate 7... ♗g4 then, apart from 8.♗e2 (which will most likely transpose into the main line), another line played is: 8.h3 ♗xf3 9.♕xf3 ♘c6 10.♗e3 0-0. White's most ambitious move here is 11.h4!? The variation 11... a5 12.0-0-0 a4 13.c5 ♘d7 14.a3 dc



15.dc ♕c8 16.♗b5 ♗xc5 17.♗xa4 ♘de5 18.♕e4 ♗xe3+ 19.♕xe3 ♕g4 20.♗c2 ♖ad8 21.f4 ♘g6 22.g3 ♘ge7 23.♖xd8 ♖xd8 24.♖d1 led to a draw in the game Mortensen – Baburin, Copenhagen 2000). White should have put down his 'sleeping policeman' with a2-a3 one move earlier, avoiding moving the c-pawn. V.Sergeev versus Grabher (Liechtenstein 2012) preferred standard counterplay in the center: 11...♘a5 12.b3 c6 13.♗d3 d5 14.c5 ♘d7 15.h5 ♖e8, and now he has the promising sacrifice 16.♗xh7+! ♔xh7 17.♕xf7 ♖f8 18.♕g6+ ♔g8 19.h6 ♗f6 20.hg ♗xg7 21.0-0-0, as a result of which one of the knights will be frozen out on the edge of the board.

8. ♗f1-e2 ♗c8-g4

A fragment of the game Gullaksen – Lie (Oslo 2011) demonstrates White's standard queenside attack and Black's no less standard operations on the kingside combined with pressure on the d4 pawn: 8...♖e8 9.0-0 ♗f6 10.b3 ♗f5 11.♗e3 c6 12.♕d2 d5 13.c5 (was it really worth rushing with this?) 13... ♘6d7 14.b4 ♘f8 15.b5 ♘e6 16.a4 ♘d7 17.♖fd1 g5 18.♕c1 g4 19.♘e1 ♕a5 20.♖a3 ♘dxc5! 21.dc d4 22.♗d2 dc 23.♗xc3 ♗xc3 24.♖xc3 ♖ad8. The activity of Black's pieces prevent his opponent from attacking the slightly exposed black king. Much more frequently, White will at some point continue h2-h3 and transpose to variations seen in Chapter 47.

9. 0-0 ...

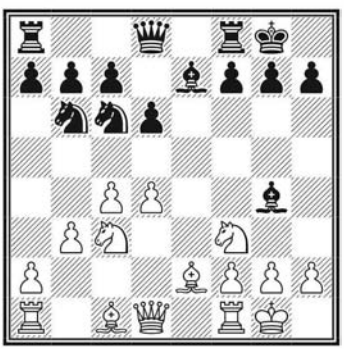
The exciting, yet unusual battle between S.Novikov and Mamedyarov (Sochi 2006) is not theoretically significant but nevertheless most of it deserves to be reviewed here: 9.b3 ♘c6 10.♗e3 (the players actually arrived at this position via a different move order) 10...f5!? (this is provoked by the early development of the bishop on e3) 11.♕d2 ♗f6 12.0-0 ♕d7 13.h3 ♗h5 14.♖ac1 ♖ae8 15.d5 ♗xf3 16.♗xf3 ♘e5 17.♗h5 ♖e7?! (17...g6 was correct) 18.c5 f4 19.♗xf4 dc 20.♗e3 ♕f5 21.♗g4 ♕d3 22.♗e6+ ♔h8 23.♖fd1 ♕g6 24.♕e2 c4 25.♗c5?! ♘d3 26.♗xe7 ♗xe7 27.bc ♘xf2 28.d6!? ♗xd6 29.♖xd6 cd 30.♖f1 ♖f6 31.♖xf2 ♖xf2 32.♔xf2 ♕f6+ 33.♕f3 ♕xe6. Black has solved his problems with great skill and finally emerged victorious. However, 25.bc ♘exc4 26.♗c5 ♘d6 27.♘b5 ♖d8 28.♗b4 would have left Black gasping for air.

9. ... ♘b8-c6

Smyslov's idea 9...c5!? 10.♗e3 ♘c6 was given a robust test in the game Bolt – Crouch (England 2003): 11.b3 ♗f6 12.♘e4 ♗xf3 13.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 14.♗xf3 cd 15.♗xc6 de 16.♗xb7 ♖ae8 17.fe ♕xe7 18.♗f3 ♕xe3+ 19.♔h1 ♕c5 20.♕d2 ♖e6 21.♖ad1 ♖fe8 22.♗g4 ♖e4 23.♗f3 ♖4e6. White has dictated terms and with the help of 23.♗h3 was perfectly entitled to reject a draw by move repetition. 12...♖e8 13.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 would have been stronger, avoiding for now swapping the light-squared bishop.

10. b2-b3 ...

If 10.d5 then Black could continue 10...♗xf3 11.♗xf3 ♘e5 12.b3 ♗g5 13.♗b2 ♘xf3+ 14.♕xf3 ♗f6 15.♖ae1 ♘d7 16.♘d1 ♖e8 17.♗xf6 ♕xf6 18.♕xf6 ♘xf6 19.♘c3 a6 20.f3 ♘d7 21.♔f2 ♘e5 22.♖e3 f5. Vaganian confidently achieved equality against Belkhodja (Moscow 2001), although so far Black has none of the advantages that eventually brought him a victory on the 53rd move.



The database here suddenly inflates due to games arising from the move order 1.e4 ♘f6 2.e5 ♘d5 3.d4 d6 4.♘f3 (and so on, for example: 4...♗g4 5.♗e2 ♘c6 6.c4 ♘b6 7.ed ed 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.b3 0-0 10.♘c3).

10. ... ♗e7-f6

It's a little early to play 10...d5 11.c5 ♘c8 12.♗f4 a6 (this loss of a tempo is forced due to ♘c3-b5) 13.h3 ♗h5 14.♘e5 ♗xe2 15.♘xc6 ♗xd1 16.♘xd8 ♗xd8 17.♖axd1 c6 18.♖fe1 – Black has yet to achieve equality.

11. ♗c1-e3 d6-d5

Now that the dark-squared bishop has volunteered to defend d4, it is just the right time for Black to push its opposite number forward. Of course, the popular move 11...♖e8 is no mistake, but it isn't particularly urgent. As the struggle now has much to do with positional manoeuvring the position is fairly balanced. For example, 12.h3 ♗h5 13.♕d2 d5 14.c5 ♘c8 15.b4 ♗xf3 16.♗xf3 ♘8e7 17.g4 g6 18.a3 ♕d7 19.♘e2 ♘d8 20.♘f4 ♘e6 21.♗g2 ♗g7 (Bischoff – Wallner, Austria 2012) – both players have carried out a late fianchetto and plan to manoeuvre even more. Tomashevsky versus Batsanin (Yekaterinburg 2002) sent the b6 knight on a different journey: 12.♕d2 ♘e7 13.h3 ♗xf3 14.♗xf3 c6 15.♗g4 d5 16.c5 ♘d7 17.♖fe1 ♘f8 18.♗f4 ♘eg6 19.♖xe8 ♕xe8 20.♖e1 ♕d8 21.♗d6, underlying

the weakness (although far from fatal) of the dark squares.

12. c4-c5 ♘b6-c8

13. h2-h3 ...

It's useful to force Black to make up his mind what to do with the bishop, which was stressed by Larsen in his comments to his famous game with Gipslis (Sousse 1967). The Grandmaster from Riga preferred an immediate queenside attack: 13.b4 ♘8e7 14.b5 ♘a5 15.h3 ♗xf3 16.♗xf3 c6 17.♕d3 ♘c4 18.♗f4 ♘g6 19.♗h2 ♗g5 20.bc bc 21.♗d1 ♗f4 22.♗c2 ♗xh2+ 23.♔xh2 ♕f6 24.g3 ♖fe8 25.♔g2 ♕g5 26.♔h2 ♘b2 27.♕f3 ♕d2, and several inaccuracies by White led to the loss of a pawn and, eventually and deservedly, the game. Larsen pointed out that chasing the knight from c4 via 22.♗b3 would have been a big improvement. Moreover, instead of the manoeuvre ♗e3-f4-h2 the setup with 18.♖ab1 and 19.♖fe1 would have been preferable. It's symptomatic of the position that Black has a statistical advantage when rolling out his own 'sleeping policeman' with 13...a6.

13. ... ♗g4-e6

The knight on c8 heads for f5, and the bishop retreats to avoid being attacked by g2-g4 with tempo. The exchange on f3 is probably better than its reputation. After 13...♗xf3 14.♗xf3 ♘8e7 the ancient recipe 15.♖c1 ♖e8 16.g4 is questionable due to 16...h6 17.a3 ♕d7 18.b4 ♘d8 19.♗g2 c6 and then bringing the knights to e6 and g6 (and maybe further). The game opened up in Wang Hao versus Berkes (Taiyuan 2006) and that led to an equal rook endgame: 15.b4 ♘f5 16.♘xd5 ♗xd4 17.♖b1 ♗xe3 18.♘xe3 ♘xe3 19.♕xd8 ♖fxd8 20.fe ♖ab8 21.♖fd1 ♔f8 22.♗xc6 bc. The variation 16.♗xd5 ♘cxd4 17.♗xd4 ♗xd4 18.♖c1 c6 19.♗e4 ♘e3! 20.fe ♗xe3+ 21.♔h1 ♗xc1 22.♕xc1 ♕d4 is more complicated but it doesn't promise White anything special.

14. b3-b4 ...

In reply to 14.♕d2 Black has played 14...b6, although we don't recommend operations for Black on the side of the board where White is supposed to have the upper hand. After 15.♘a4 ♗d7 16.♖ac1 ♘8e7 17.g4 g6 18.♗h6 ♗g7 19.♗xg7 ♔xg7 20.♕f4 White has a noticeable advantage (Furhoff – Baburin, Stockholm 2009).

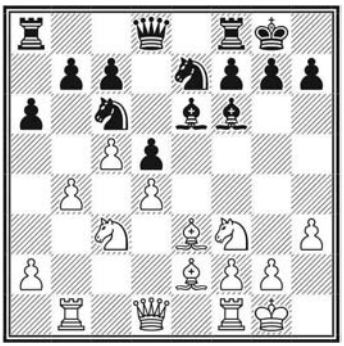
14. ... a7-a6

The point of this move, which is more often seen in systems with 5... cd, is to force White to spend two tempos preparing b4-b5 (♖a1-b1 and a2-a4) instead of one, and, further, to exploit the open a-file to serve the interests of the queen's rook. On the other hand, 14...♘xb4 isn't a bad move either, albeit not the best, and after 15.♖b1 a5 16.a3 ♘a6 17.♗xa6 ba 18.♕a4 ♘e7 19.♕xa5 (Bromann – Madsen, Copenhagen 1996) 19...♕c8 20.♖fe1 ♗f5 Black defended successfully.

15. ♖a1-b1 ...

If 15.b5 ab 16.♘xb5 Bagirov's suggestion 16...♘a5?! 17.♗f4 c6 doesn't lead to anything after 18.♘c7 ♖a7 19.♘xe6 fe 20.♖e1. Better is 16...♘6a7 17.♘c3 b6 18.cb ♘xb6 19.♘e5 c5 20.dc ♗xe5 21.cb d4 (Williams – Baburin, Calvia 2004) 22.f4 ♕xb6 23.♖b1 ♕d8 24.fe de 25.♕xd8 ♖fxd8 with equal chances.

15. ... ♘c8-e7



Zherebukh and Pavlov (Khmelnitsky 2008) got into a complicated fight on the kingside via 16.g4 h6 17.♕d2 g5 18.♘e1 ♘g6 19.♘g2 ♗g7 20.f4 f5!? 21.fg hg 22.♗d3 f4 23.♗xg6 fe 24.♘xe3 ♘xd4. The pawn charge on the queenside is more logical, but Ligart gradually neutralized Parkanyi's advantage (Miskolc 2001): 16.a4 ♘f5 17.b5 ♘xe3 18.fe ab 19.ab ♘e7 20.♕d2 ♖e8 21.♗d3 ♕d7 22.♘e2 g6 23.♘f4 ♖a3 24.♖a1 ♖ea8 25.♕b2 ♖xa1 26.♖xa1 ♕c8 27.♖a3 ♔g7 28.♕a2 ♖xa3 29.♕xa3 ♗f5 30.♗xf5 ♕xf5, and a draw soon followed.

Apart from a few insignificant details, our evaluation of the variation with 7.♘f3 ♗e7 8.♗e2 ♗g4 remains unchanged. Black normally gains a comfortable position thanks to the moves that have been improved on over many games.

Chapter 47. 6.♘c3 ♗e7 7.h3

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**e5xd6**	**e7xd6**
6.	**♘b1-c3**	**♗f8-e7**
7.	**h2-h3**	**...**



In the previous chapter we rehearsed strong arguments in favor of the bishop developing to g4, which explains the strong popularity of White's prophylactic move here.

7. ... 0-0

It's unclear which of the alternative plans really justify waiting to castle. The early ♘b8-c6 is exposed, as usual, to d4-d5. For example, 7...♗f5 8.♘f3 ♘c6 9.d5 ♘b4 10.♘d4 ♗g6 11.a3 ♘a6 12.b4 0-0 13.♗e2 ♘b8 14.0-0 c5 (Berbatov – Kukov, Bulgaria 2010) 15.dc ♘xc6 16.♗e3 ♘e5 17.♕b3 with an obvious advantage. 9... ♘e5 10.♘d4 ♗g6 11.♗e2 c5 12.dc ♘xc6 13.♗e3 0-0 14.0-0 d5!? 15.cd ♘b4 is more interesting (Brodsky – Krivonogov, St. Petersburg 2000), as if White continues 16.♘db5 ♘4xd5 17.♘xd5 ♘xd5 18.♗xa7 ♘f4 then Black has compensation for the pawn.

8. ♘g1-f3 ...

8.♗d3 (Game 48) also takes the f5 square from the enemy bishop.

8. ... ♗c8-f5

8...♗f6 9.♗e2 ♗e6!? is seen in practice very rarely, which seems to us unfair. After 10.d5 ♗xc3+ 11.bc ♗d7 12.0-0 ♘a6 13.♗g5 (13. ♗e3 ♘c5 14.♗d4 ♖e8 15.♕d2 ♘e4 16.♕f4 c5 17.dc ♗xc6 with equality – Ivanchuk) 13...f6 14.♗e3 ♘c5 15.♖e1 ♖e8 16.♗f1 ♖e7 17.♘d4 ♕f8 18.♘b5 ♗xb5 19.cb ♖ae8 20.a4 f5! 21.a5 f4! 22.♗d2 ♖xe1 23.♗xe1 ♘bd7 24.f3 ♕f6 (Volokitin – Ivanchuk, Foros 2006) the black knights are so much better than the white bishops that White should proceed with exchanges: 17.♗xc5 ♖xe1 18.♕xe1 dc 19.♕d2 ♕f8 20.♖e1 ♖e8.

In the game Malisauskas – V.Sergeev (Poland 2009) simplifications led to a fair draw quite quickly: 10.b3 d5 11.c5 ♘6d7 12.♕d3 ♘c6 13.0-0 ♖e8 14.♗e3 ♘xc5! 15.dc d4 16.♘xd4 ♘xd4 17.♖ad1 ♘xe2+ 18.♕xe2 ♕e7 19.♘e4 ♗f5 20.♘xf6+. Ivanchuk decided that Black was better after 12...b6!?; however, chances are probably equal in this complicated position – 13.cb ab 14.0-0 c5 15.♗e3 ♘c6 16.♕d2. Nakamura versus Adams (Tripoli 2004) put off developing the bishop for a couple of moves – 9...♖e8 10.0-0 ♘c6 11.b3 ♗e6!? 12.♘e4 d5 13.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 14.c5 ♘d7 15.♗e3 ♗f5 16.♕d2 h6 17.♖fe1 ♘f8 18.♖ad1 g5 19.♘e5 ♘g6 20.♘xg6 ♕xg6 21.♗b5 ♖e7, and the players agreed a draw.

9. ♗f1-e2 ...

If 9.♗d3, then 9...♗xd3 10.♕xd3 ♘c6 is fine, where preventing the knight sortie to b4 with 11.a3? would be like taking medicine whose after-effects were worse than the illness – 11...♘a5 12.♘d2 ♗g5 13.♘ce4 ♗xd2+ 14.♘xd2 ♖e8+.

9. ... ♘b8-c6

Moving the knight to d7 would mean having to make do with passive defense. For example, 9...♗f6 10. 0-0 ♖e8 11.♖e1 ♘8d7 12.♗e3 ♘f8

13.♕b3 c6 14.a4 ♕d7 15.a5 ♘c8 16.♗f1 h6 17.♕a3 ♘e7 18.♗f4 ♖ad8 19.♖ad1 ♘fg6 20.♗g3 d5 21. ♘a4 with better chances (Nedela – V.Sergeev, Czech Republic 2012). 14...♕c7 is probably somewhat better, reserving the d7 square for the retreating knight.

10. 0-0 ...

As always, one should never ignore the opportunity to advance in the center with tempo. So he could also play 10.d5 ♘e5 11.♘d4 ♗g6 12.b3 c5 13.dc bc 14.0-0 c5 15.♘f3 ♗f6 16.♗b2? (16.♕d2 would have maintained equality), and even a Grandmaster as strong as Granda Zuniga (versus Di Berardino, Sao Paulo 2009) missed the hidden tactic 16...♘xf3+! 17.♗xf3 ♘xc4! 18.bc ♖b8 19.♕d2 ♗g5 20.♕e2 ♖e8 21.♗e4 ♗xe4 22.♘xe4 f5. Black wins back the piece and emerges a pawn up.

10. ... ♗e7-f6

Black's plan includes both ♗e7-f6 and ♖f8-e8, but it's better to start with the bishop. If 10... ♖e8 11.d5!? ♘e5 12.♘d4 then the retreat to g6 doesn't work due to 13.f4, while after 12...♗d7 Lanzani extended his minimal advantage against V.Sergeev (Warsaw 2005), albeit not without some help from his opponent: 13.b3 c5 14.dc bc 15.♗e3 ♕c7 16.♖c1 ♖ad8 17.♕c2 ♗f8?! 18.♗g5 f6 19.♗d2 c5 20.♘f5 ♕c8 21.♘e3.

11. ♗c1-f4 ...

In anticipation of d6-d5 the bishop takes up a more active position. After 11.♗e3 d5 12.c5 ♘c4 13.♗c1 b6 14.b3 ♘4a5 15.cb ab 16.♗f4 ♘b4 17.♕d2 ♖e8 18.♖ac1 ♖c8 19.♖fd1 (Rozentalis – Krasenkow, Warsaw 2009) 19...c6 Black has a solid position.

In the vast majority of lines in the 5...ed system, the bishop pair is not particularly effective. So it would be wrong to reject trading a bishop for a knight if it brings certain dividends. The continuation 11.d5 ♘b4 12.a3 ♗xc3! 13.bc ♘a6 14.♗e3 ♘c5 15.♘d4 ♗g6 16.♖e1 (Fedorowicz – Porper, Calgary 2010) 16...♘ba4 17.♕d2 ♖e8 was good for Black, as his knights took up excellent positions on blockading squares. The reciprocal exchange by White with 15.♗xc5 is the best way to play this.

11. ... ♖f8-e8

But not 11...d5? 12.c5 ♘c4 (Barsky – Miroshnichenko, Polanica Zdroj 2000) 13.♗xc7! ♕xc7 14.♘xd5 ♘xb2 with a pleasant choice between 15.♘xc7 ♘xd1 16.♖axd1 and 15.♘xf6+ gf 16.♕b3 ♖fd8 17.♕xb2.

12. ♖a1-c1 ...

Bauer (against Degraeve, France 2005) exploited the disadvantages of 12.♖e1 with the help of a tactic. He continued 12...♘b4! 13.♖c1 ♖xe2! 14.♘xe2 ♘d3 15.♕b3 a5 16.♗e3 d5 17.c5 a4 18.♕b5 ♕d7 (thereby rejecting the likely repetition of moves after 18...♘c4 19.♕xb7 ♘xe3 20.fe ♖b8 21.♕a7

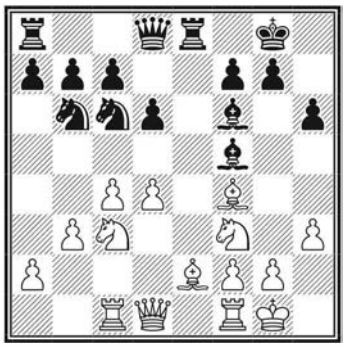
♖b8) 19.♕xd7 ♘xd7 20.♘g3 ♗g6 21.♗g5 ♗xg5 22.♘xg5 f6 23.♘f3 ♘b8 24.♖c3 ♘xe1 25.♘xe1 ♘c6 26.♘e2 ♖a5 27.♖a3 ♖b5 28.♖xa4 ♖xb2, and Black converted his advantage into a point in the ending.

12. ... h7-h6

This is a useful prophylactic move, rather than planned aggression. The example of Kogan – Forcen Esteban (Zaragoza 2011) should warn Black away from blowing the kingside open: 12... g5?! 13.♗e3 h6 14.♕b3 a5 15.♖fd1 a4 16.♕a3 d5 17.♘xd5 ♘xd5 18.cd ♘e7 19.♗b5 ♗d7 20.♗c4 b5 21.♗d3 ♘xd5 22.♗b1. Black's light squares on the kingside and dark squares on the queenside are pretty weak now.

The rook's move to the open line also allows Black to play 12...♗e4 (which is also a popular alternative to ♗f5-g4 in response to h2-h3). After 13.♘xe4 ♖xe4 14.♗e3 d5 15.c5 ♘c8 16.♗d3 ♖e8 17.♕d2 ♘8e7 18.b4 a6 19.♖fe1 ♕d7 20.a4 ♘f5 21.♗xf5 ♕xf5 22.b5 ab 23.ab ♘a5 24.♕c2 ♕xc2 25.♖xc2 ♘c4 Black gained the initiative (Lengyel – Popovics, Budapest 2007). He should have fought for the e5 square via 17.♖e1 ♕d7 18.♗f4 ♖xe1+ 19.♕xe1 (and the double capture on d4 will be met with ♕e1-b4).

13. b2-b3 ...



White's chances are somewhat better, as it is hard for Black to carry out the central push that he envisages in a way that works. The variation 13...d5 14.c5 ♘c8 15.♗b5 ♘8e7 16.♗e5?! ♗xe5 17.♘xe5 ♘xe5 18.♗xe8 ♘d3 can be improved by 16.♖e1 and only then following with ♗f4-e5. Spraggett outplayed Magem Badals (Benasque 2008) after 13...♘e7 14.♕d2 c6 15.♖fe1 d5 16.c5 ♘d7 17.♗f1 ♘f8 18.g4?! ♗h7 19.b4 ♘e6 20.♗g3 ♘g6 21.♗g2 ♘h4, although this was significantly helped by the pawn's abandonment of his king. Givon carefully gained equality against Finkel (Jerusalem 2013): 13...a6 14.♖e1 ♕d7 15.♕d2 ♖ad8 16.♗f1 ♖xe1 17.♖xe1 d5 18.c5 ♘c8 19.♘e5 ♗xe5 20.♗xe5 ♘xe5 21.♖xe5 ♘e7 22.♖e1 c6 23.♘e2 ♖e8 24.♘f4 ♘g6 25.♘xg6 ♗xg6, and after exchanging major pieces on the open file the players agreed a draw.

Game 48
S.Jasny – V.Sergeev
Ostrava 2009

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**e5xd6**	**e7xd6**
6.	**♘b1-c3**	**♗f8-e7**
7.	**h2-h3**	**0-0**
8.	**♗f1-d3**	**...**



Here we analyze developing the knight on f3, whereas ♘g1-e2 belongs in another opera (Chapter 48).

8. ... ♘b8-c6

Appel against Smeets (Germany 2005) preferred 8...c6, but then failed to find the chance to play d6-d5: 9.♕c2 g6 10.♘f3 ♘a6 11.a3 ♖e8 12.0-0 ♘c7 13.♖e1 ♘e6 14.♗h6 ♗f6 15.♘e4 ♗g7 16.♗xg7 ♘xg7 17.c5 dc 18.dc ♘d5 19.♘d6 ♖e7, and here White could play the strong continuation 20.♖xe7 ♕xe7 21.♖e1 ♗e6 22.♕c1 (the queen is aiming for h6). 9...h6 would have been safer, avoiding weakening the dark squares.

9. ♘g1-f3 ♗e7-f6

Two weeks later against Areshchenko (Alushta 2009) Sergeev continued 9...♖e8 10. 0-0 ♘b4 11.♗b1 c6 12.♖e1 g6 13.a3 ♘a6 14.♗a2 ♘c7 15.d5 c5 16.♗f4 ♗f5 17.g4 ♗c8 18.♕d2 f5 19.g5 a5 20.h4 ♗d7 21.h5 – the bishop's passive position on a2 is more than compensated for by the lack of activity of Black's knights. Obviously, instead of 14.♗a2 the bishop could have returned to d3.

10. 0-0 ...

White has no need to defend d4, as 10...♘xd4?! 11.♘xd4 ♗xd4 12.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 13.♕xd4 is clearly better for White. Once the game opens up the knight on b6 is pretty useless, while the black king is somewhat exposed.

10. ... ♖f8-e8

11. b2-b3 ♘c6-b4

In the game Valli – Ebeling (Helsinki 2012) Black gained the initiative after 11...♗e6 12.♘e4 h6 13.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 14.♗e3 d5 15.c5 ♘d7 16.g4 ♕e7 17.♔h2 b6!? 18.♗f4 bc 19.♗xc7 c4 20.♗c2 ♘b4 21.♗g3 ♘xc2 22.♕xc2 ♖ac8 23.♖fe1 ♘f6. The bishop pair failed to benefit White, and he should have preferred 12.♗f4 to target c7 (after d6-d5).

12. ♗d3-b1 c7-c6

Sergeev intends to follow the traditional plan with d6-d5. The continuation 12...c5 13.♗b2 ♘c6

14.♘e4 ♗xd4 15.♘xd4 cd 16.♗xd4 ♘xd4 17.♕xd4 d5 18.♖d1 ♗e6 19.♘c5 is on the whole pleasant for White, although the lack of connection between his rooks is a disadvantage.

13. a2-a3 ♘b4-a6
14. ♗c1-e3 ...

As is usual in such situations, he should have fought for the dark squares via 14.♗f4 d5 15.c5 ♘d7 16.♗d6. After the modest move played White definitively gives up his advantage.

14. ... ♘a6-c7
15. ♗b1-c2 d6-d5
16. c4-c5 ♘b6-d7
17. ♕d1-d2 b7-b6!?

In this structure b7-b6 is a very useful advance providing that White has not prepared counter-measures. Here the Grandmaster hurries to develop his bishop on the queenside, as it has nothing to do on the c8-h3 diagonal.

18. ♖a1-c1 ♗c8-a6
19. ♖f1-d1 ♘c7-e6
20. ♘c3-a4 g7-g6

The two opponents are somewhat hesitant here: White avoids exchanging on b6, while Black avoids the exchange on c5. But White's rejection of 21.b4 finally prompts Black into action.

21. ♗c2-b1?! b6xc5
22. d4xc5 ♘d7-e5
23. ♘f3-d4 ♘e6xd4
24. ♗e3xd4 ♗f6-g5
25. f2-f4? ...

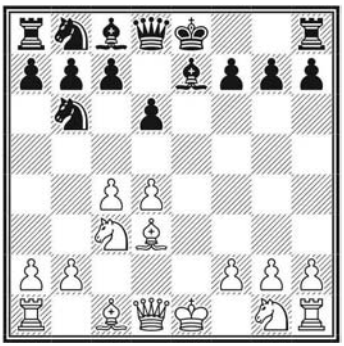
Surprising carelessness! Black's winning response is hardly difficult to find. 25.♗e3 ♗xe3 26.fe ♕g5 27.♕f2 ♘d7 is also better for Black but White can fight on.

25. ... ♘e5-f3+!
26. g2xf3 ♖e8-e2
27. ♕d2-c3 ♗g5xf4
28. ♗d4-f6 ♕d8-d7
29. ♗b1-d3 ♗f4-e3+
30. ♔g1-f1 ♖e2-f2+
31. ♔f1-e1 ♕d7xh3
0-1

After h2-h3 Black is not able to carry out his plans as smoothly as in the variations seen in the previous chapter. But he faces no serious problems either. Black's bishop is quite **comfortable** on the b1-h7 diagonal, so White should consider ♗f1-d3 as played in Game 48.

Chapter 48. 6.♘c3 ♗e7 7.♗d3

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
5. e5xd6 e7xd6
6. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-e7
7. ♗f1-d3 ...



White immediately prevents the advance of his bishop's counterpart on f5, while the subsequent ♘g1-e2 will make the ♗c8-g4 pin useless in view of f2-f3. This was first played by Znosko-Borovsky against Oskam back in 1923. It was then taken up by the great theoreticians Nimzowitsch and Boleslavsky, as well as by world champions Alekhine himself and Fischer (albeit, only in simultaneous games). Nevertheless, until the mid-1990s this setup was seen in practice only rarely. Presumably, the wave of interest in it is due to White's only modest achievements in other lines.

7. ... ♘b8-c6

Zoltan Varga (against Vojtek, Slovakia 2006) played his favorite defense in his preferred unassuming manner: 7...c6 8.♘ge2 d5 9.b3 a5 10.♗f4 ♘a6 11.c5 ♘d7 12.♖c1 ♘c7 13.0-0 ♘e6 14.♗g3 0-0 15.♗f5 ♗g5 16.♖c2 ♖e8. Black has played 'scientifically', but his queen's bishop can hardly be considered properly developed – rather it has been trampled underfoot by its own horses!

Torre equalized against Lim (Turin 2006) after 7...0-0 8.♘ge2 ♗g4 9.f3 ♗h4+!? 10.♘g3 ♖e8+ 11.♘ce2 ♗d7 12.0-0 ♘c6 13.b3 g6 14.d5 ♘e5 15.♗b2 ♗f6 16.♗d4 ♗g7 17.♕d2 ♕h4. The check with the bishop is good here, as 10.g3 ♗xf3 11.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 12.♕d3+ ♔g8 13.♕xf3 ♗f6 14.0-0 ♘c6 15.♕d3 ♖e8 is clearly better for Black. Instead of 9.f3 it would have been better to castle, with a likely transposition to the main lines. If White does not want to allow the bishop to reach g4 then he should continue 8.h3 (see Game 49)

8. ♘g1-e2 ...

For 8.♗e3, see Game 50.

8. ... ♗c8-g4

The bishop may later move via h5 to g6 and stand up to the enemy bishop along its diagonal, from where the black bishop was earlier forbidden to tread. In a rapid game against Leko (Mukachevo 2007) Ivanchuk pushed forward the a-pawn, thanks to which after d4-d5 he gained a good square for his knight on c5: 8...a5 9.0-0 a4 10.♗e3 ♘b4 11.d5 0-0 12.♘d4 ♘xd3 13.♕xd3 ♘d7 14.♕c2 ♘c5 15.♖ad1 ♗g5 16.♖fe1 ♗g4 17.f3 ♗xe3+ 18.♖xe3 ♗d7 19.♘db5. White's chances are nevertheless preferable, as the pawn on a4 requires protection.

Much more frequently, though,

Black castles in this position (see Game 51).

9. f2-f3 ...

9.♗e3 0-0 leads to Game 50. Black gains zero advantage from delaying castling. For example, 9...♕d7 10.0-0 ♘b4 11.b3 ♘xd3 12.♕xd3 d5 13.c5 ♘c8 14.♘g3 ♗h4 15.f3 ♗e6 16.♘h5 0-0 17.♕d2 ♗d8 18.♖ae1 f6 (So – Megaranto, Indonesia 2008), followed by the highly promising 19.♘xg7! Or 10.b3 ♘b4 11.♗b1 c6 12.0-0 d5 13.c5 ♘c8 14.a3 ♘a6 15.b4 ♘c7 16.♕d3 g6 17.♗h6 ♗f8?! (Meier – V.Popov, Dresden 2007), and 18.♕g3! ♗xe2 19.♕e5+ ♘e6 20.♕xh8 ♗xf1 21.♔xf1 won the exchange.

In principle, exchanging the light-squared bishops is fine for Black, as Bellini's idea (versus David, Turin 2012) to force this exchange at the cost of weakening his kingside is not particularly impressive: 9.h3 ♗h5 10.g4 ♗g6 11.♗xg6 hg 12.b3 ♗g5 (12...♕d7!?) 13.d5 ♗xc1 14.dc ♗b2 15.cb ♗xa1 16.ba♕ ♗xc3+ (this is equally as good as 16...♕xa8 17.♘d5 ♘xd5 18.cd ♗e5) 17.♘xc3 ♕xa8 18.f3 0-0 19.♔f2 a5 20.♖e1 a4 21.♖e7 ab 22.ab ♕a5 23.♘d5 ♘xd5 24.cd ♕c5+ 25.♔g3 ♖a8, and a draw.

9. ... ♗g4-h5

9...♗h4+ provokes tactical complications: 10.g3!? ♗xf3 11.0-0 ♗xe2 (11...♘xd4? 12.♕e1!) 12.♕xe2+ ♗e7 13.♘d5! ♘xd5 (13...♘xd4 14.♕f2 ♗f6 15.♗h6!) 14.cd ♘b4 15.♕h5 g6 16.♕f3 f6? 17.♗b5+ ♔f7 18.♗h6. White is close to winning (Draghici – Yatsishin, Vilnius 2012), although if Black plays 16...f5 17.♗xf5 ♖f8 18.♕b3 ♖xf5 19.♖xf5 gf 20.♕xb4 b6 White's advantage is insignificant.

10. 0-0 ...

If 10.b3 ♗h4+ 11.g3!? ♗xf3 then positions arise from the previous commentary but with the white pawn on b3 (which is probably to Black's advantage). In practice, Black has not accepted the challenge, making do with gradually gaining equality. See for example Polzin – Baburin (Austria 2003): 11...♗f6 12.♗e4 ♗g6 13.0-0 0-0 14.♗f4 ♖e8 15.♕d2 ♖b8 16.♖ad1 ♘e7 17.c5 ♘bc8 18.♗xg6 ♘xg6 19.♘e4 ♗e7 20.♗e3 ♗f8 21.♗f2 dc 22.dc ♘ce7 23.♕c2 ♕c8.

10. ... ♗h5-g6

Now it's not see easy for White to build an initiative, unlike the case with continuing 10...0-0 11.b3 ♗f6 12.♗e4 ♗g6 13.♗e3. The c4-d4 pawn pair are soundly protected, and after 13...♖e8 14.♕d2 a5 15.♖ad1 ♖b8?! 16.♗xg6 hg 17.d5 ♘e5 18.♘e4 ♗h4 19.♗xb6 cb 20.♘d4 f5 21.♘c3 (Galanov – Chetverik, Gyongyos 1995) Black's position is critical due to ♘d4-e6. 15...♗xe4 16.fe ♘d7 is stronger, with Black having chances to neutralize the pressure on the f-file.

In the game Studer – Hug (Switzerland 2013) Black played all his aces on the queenside after 11... ♖e8 12.d5 ♘b4 13.♗e4 ♗f6 14.♗b2

♗g6 15.♘g3 a5 16.♕d2 a4 17.♖ae1 ♘xa2!? 18.♘xa2 ab 19.♗xf6 ♕xf6 20.♘b4 ♘xc4 21.♕d3 b5 22.♗xg6 ♕xg6 23.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 24.♖b1 b2 25.♕xg6 hg. Obviously, White had various ways to prevent Black's flurry of activity, and in the example 17.♗xg6 hg 18.♘ge4 ♗e5 19.♘xa4 ♘xc4 20.bc ♖xa4 21.♗xe5 ♖xe5 22.♖ab1 ♘a6 23.♕c2 ♕e8 Black has yet to equalize.

11. ♗d3xg6 ...

If 11.b3 ♗xd3 12.♕xd3 0-0 13.♘g3 ♖e8 14.♗e3 then Black has no obvious weaknesses but no activity either. The pawn advance d6-d5 followed by besieging White's blocked pawn is possible in principle, but its chances of success are questionable. Note that at any moment the knight may move from g3 (which is an inappropriate square in many openings) in order to get to e4, f5 or h5.

11. ... h7xg6

12. d4-d5 ...

After 12.b3 d5 13.c5 ♘c8 14.♖e1 0-0 15.♘f4 ♗f6 16.♘fxd5 ♗xd4+ 17.♗e3 ♗e5 18.♗f2 ♖e8 19.♕d3 (Perpinya Rofes – Mirzoev, Spain 2005) the opening of the position, quite predictably, played into White's hands thanks to his space advantage and better piece placement. So Black should probably have continued to manoeuvre along his three ranks.

12. ... ♘c6-e5

13. b2-b3 ...



White's territorial advantage is quite prominent, as in the fragment Langrock – V.Sergeev (Rakovnik 2008): 13...0-0 14.f4 ♘ed7 15.♘d4 ♗f6 16.♘e4 ♘c5 17.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 18.♗b2. When playing Polivanov (Polanica Zdroj 2001) Sergeev disputed the territory at the cost of weakening his light squares – 13...♘bd7 14.♘d4 g5 15.♘e4 ♘c5 16.♘xc5 dc 17.♘f5 ♗f6 18.♗b2 ♕d7 19.♕c2 0-0-0 20.♘g3.

Game 49
A.Volokitin – A.Bortnyk
Sochi 2014

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**e5xd6**	**e7xd6**
6.	**♘b1-c3**	**♗f8-e7**
7.	**h2-h3**	**0-0**
8.	**♗f1-d3**	**...**



8. ... ♖f8-e8

This practically forces 9.♘ge2, as 9.♗e3 ♗g5 and 9.♘f3 ♗g5+ looks unseemly. In the game Mariano – Mamedyarov (Dubai 2004) after 8...♘c6 9.♘ge2 ♘b4 10.0-0 ♘xd3 11.♕xd3 c6 12.d5 (too hurried) 12...cd 13.♘xd5 ♘xd5 14.cd ♗f6 15.♘g3 ♖e8 16.♖b1 ♗e5 17.♗d2 ♗d7 18.♗c3 ♗xc3 19.♕xc3 ♖e5 the weakness on d5 turned out to be more significant than its equivalent on d6.

9. ♘g1-e2 ♗e7-f6

Let's check the bishop exchange: 9...♗g5 10.0-0 ♗xc1 11.♖xc1 ♘c6 12.a3 ♘d7 13.b4 ♘f6 14.♕c2 ♗d7 15.♖fd1 ♘e7 16.d5 ♘g6 17.♘d4 ♘h5 18.♕d2 ♘e5 19.♗f1 ♕h4 20.g3 (Volokitin – Nogueiras, Calvia 2004) 20...♕xd4! 21.♕xd4 ♘f3+ 22.♔h1 ♘xd4 23.♖xd4 ♘f6 with equality. If White chooses not to ignore the open file and continues 14.♖e1 ♘e7 15.♘f4 ♘g6 16.♕d2, then it's not so easy for Black to defend. Therefore, Bortnyk returns to the trodden path, albeit with a different move order.

10. 0-0 ♘b8-c6

11. b2-b3 d6-d5

Without the black pawn here White's pawn can advance to this square, causing trouble. For example, 11...g6 12.♗e3 ♘b4 13.♗b1 a5 14.♕d2 ♘d7 15.a3 ♘c6 16.♗d3 ♘e7 17.♖ae1 ♗g7 18.♗g5 f6 19.♗e3 ♘f8 20.♘g3 ♗e6 (Tukhaev – Khaetsky, Evpatoria 2007) 21.d5 ♗f7 22.♖e2 f5 23.♖fe1 with a clear advantage.

12. c4-c5 ♘b6-d7

Beyond this, events could follow those typical of this opening or take a turn of their own. For example, 13.♗b5 ♘e7 14.♗e3 c6 15.♗d3 ♘f8 16.♘g3 g6 17.♕d2 ♘e6 18.♘ce2 ♘g7 19.♗g5 ♘ef5 20.♗xf6 ♕xf6 21.♗xf5 ♗xf5 (Berg – Zhao Xue, Sweden 2007) and 13.♘xd5 ♘xc5 14.♗c4 ♗e6 15.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 16.♗e3 ♗xc4 17.bc ♘e4 18.♘f4 ♖ac8 19.♘d5 ♕e6 (Z.Varga – Hou Yifan, Budapest 2008). But in either case chances are equal.

13. ♗d3-c2 ♘d7-f8

14. ♗c1-e3 ...

White should have strengthened the c5 pawn, in order to counter Black's next move. After 14.a3 b6 15.b4 bc 16.bc ♗a6 17.♗a4 ♖e6 18.♗xc6 ♖xc6 19.♗e3 ♖e6 equality remains intact.

14. ... b7-b6

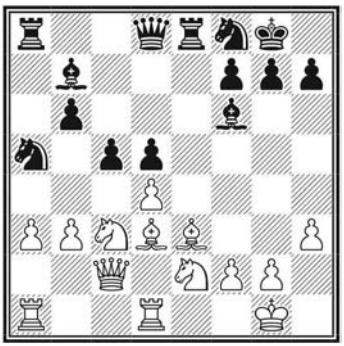
15. c5xb6 a7xb6

16. a2-a3 ♘c6-a5

17. ♗c2-d3 ♗c8-b7

Obviously, 17...c6 and ♗c8-a6 would have been in keeping with positional rules and would have promised Black pleasant play. But the talented junior detected a weakness in the play of his eminent opponent and chose to play more energetically.

18. ♕d1-c2 c7-c5
19. ♖f1-d1 ...



19. ... ♖e8xe3!?

He continues with his aggressive policy; the variations 19...c4 20.bc ♘xc4 21.♗xc4 dc 22.d5 ♘d7 and 20...dc 21.♗e4 ♗g5 22.♗xg5 ♕xg5 23.♗xb7 ♘xb7 involve too many exchanges.

20. f2xe3 ♕d8-e8
21. b3-b4?! ...

Volokitin surrenders the initiative to his opponent. If 21.e4 c4 22.♘xd5 cd 23.♘xf6+ gf 24.♖xd3 ♗xe4 25.♖g3+ ♘g6 26.♕b2 the position would be complicated and hard to evaluate.

21. ... ♕e8xe3+
22. ♔g1-h1 c5xd4
23. b4xa5 d4xc3
24. a5-a6 ♖a8xa6!

He has no doubts about making another exchange sac. White should probably have declined it and sought to save the game after 25.♘xc3 ♖a8 26.♕b3 ♗xc3 27.♕xc3 d4 28.♕d2 ♕xh3+ 29.♔g1 ♕g4.

25. ♗d3xa6 ♗b7xa6
26. ♘e2-c1 d5-d4
27. ♘c1-d3 ♗a6-b7
28. ♘d3-f2 ♗f6-h4
29. ♖d1-f1 ♘f8-e6
30. ♘f2-d1 ♕c3xh3+
31. ♔h1-g1 ♕h3-g4
32. ♖a1-a2 ♗b7-d5

Black comes out fine in terms of material – a bishop, knight and four pawns for two rooks. And now, because of 33.♖a1? d3! and 33.♕e2 ♕g6, he will get a big prize.

33. ♕c2-a4 ♗d5xa2
34. ♘d1xc3 ♗a2-b3
35. ♕a4xb3 d4xc3
36. ♕b3xc3 ♕g4-d4+
37. ♕c3xd4 ♘e6xd4

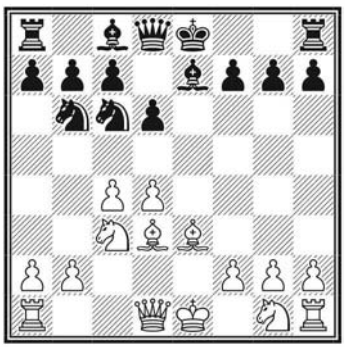
The game took place in a team competition, and instead of resigning straight away White made a few more moves.

38. ♖f1-b1 ♗h4-d8
39. ♔g1-f2 ♘d4-e6
40. ♔f2-e3 ♗d8-e7
41. a3-a4 h7-h5
42. ♔e3-d2 ♗e7-c5
43. ♔d2-d3 h5-h4
44. ♔d3-c4 g7-g5

0-1

Game 50
M.Antipov – Ya.Zinchenko
Livigno 2012

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**e5xd6**	**e7xd6**
6.	**♘b1-c3**	**♗f8-e7**
7.	**♗f1-d3**	**♘b8-c6**
8.	**♗c1-e3**	**...**



8. ... 0-0

The idea of the bishop invading on h4 can be seen in the commentary to 7...♘c6 (in the theoretical section) as played by Lehnert versus Kupreichik (Boeblingen 1998), which included the loss of a tempo: 8...♗f6 9.♘ge2 ♗g4 10.f3 ♗h4+ 11.♘g3 ♗h5 12.0-0 ♗g6 13.b3 0-0 14.♗xg6 fg 15.c5 ♘c8 16.b4 d5 17.♕b3 ♘8e7 18.♘ge2 ♕d7 19.♖ad1 ♖ad8. Black has done quite well, but the players missed a little tactic – 12.c5! dc 13.♕e2! (exploiting the delay in castling) 13...0-0 14.dc ♘d7 15.0-0-0 with the advantage.

9. ♘g1-e2 ♘c6-b4

In reply to 9...♗g4 White will not even try f2-f3. After 10.h3 ♗h5 11.d5?! ♘e5 12.b3 ♗f6 13.♖c1 ♗g5 14.f4 ♗h4+ (step by step!) 15.♗f2 ♗xe2 16.♗xe2 ♗xf2+ 17.♔xf2 ♕f6 18.g3 ♖ae8 19.♖e1 ♘ed7 20.♗f3 ♘c5 21.♕d2 a6 22.♔g2 ♕f5 23.♖e3 ♖xe3 24.♕xe3 ♕d3 25.♕xd3 ♘xd3 26.♖d1 ♘c5 27.♖e1 ♖d8 Zhao Zong Yuan went on to win an equal endgame against Nakamura (Gibraltar 2008), although at this point the American still had the initiative. Better would have been 11.♕d2 ♘b4 12.♘f4 ♘xd3+ 13.♕xd3 ♗g6 14.♘xg6 hg 15.b3 a6 16.0-0 d5 17.c5 ♘c8 (Ankerst – Miles, Pula 1994), and by re-jigging his setup with ♗e3-f4 and ♕d3-g3 White would lord over the dark squares.

10. b2-b3 ...

This is to prevent the black knight settling on c4 in the event that the structure changes. The computers overestimate White's position after 10.0-0 ♘xd3 11.♕xd3 d5 12.c5 ♘c4. If we slightly correct the assessment of the position after 13.♗c1 b6 14.b3 ♘a5 15.♗e3 c6 16.♖fe1 ♖e8 17.♖ac1 ♗f8 18.♘a4 ♗d7 (Moskalenko – Narciso Dublan, Spain 2009) from 'slightly better for White' to 'equal', then Houdini's delight at the trick 13.♘xd5 ♕xd5 14.♘f4 ♘xe3 15.♘xd5 ♕xd5 is contrary to common sense. Does White really

have any use of the extra pawn, and can't the three active pieces cope with the queen?!

10. ... ♘b4xd3+

Khenkin against Wippermann (Saarbruecken 2009) opted for 10...♗g5 11.0-0 ♗g4 12.♕d2 ♗xe3 13.fe ♘xd3 14.♕xd3 ♗xe2 15.♕xe2 ♕e7 16.♖ae1 ♖ae8. Even with the knight at e4 Black has no advantage, while from b6 he is four whole jumps away from the desired outpost!

11. ♕d1xd3 ♗c8-g4

After 11...c6 12.d5!? ♖e8 13.0-0 ♗f8 14.♖ad1 ♗g4 15.♖d2 ♕c8 16.♘g3 cd 17.♘xd5 ♘xd5 18.♕xd5 ♗d7 19.♘e2 ♗c6 20.♕g5 ♖e6 21.♘f4 ♖e5 22.♕g3 ♕f5 23.h3 a6 24.♘d3 ♖e6 25.♘f4 ♖e5 26.♘d3 ♖e6 27.♘f4 Hou Yifan and Short (Wijk aan Zee 2009) drew the game by move repetition. It was an uneven battle, and it's most unlikely that Short gained any pleasure from passive defense. Baburin in his battle with Ramirez Garcia (Porto San Giorgio 2013) gave up a pawn, which was partially compensated for by the bishop pair's advantage: 12...♗f6 13.♖d1 cd 14.♘xd5 ♘xd5 15.♕xd5 ♗e5 16.f4 ♗f6 17.♕xd6 ♕a5+ 18.♕d2 ♕a6 19.0-0 ♗g4. The position after 13.0-0 arose via a different move order in the game Huschenbeth versus Jugelt (Hamburg 2013). After 13...cd 14.♗xb6 dc 15.♗xd8 cd 16.♗xf6 de 17.♖fe1 gf 18.♘e4 ♖d8 19.♘xf6+ ♔g7 20.♘h5+ ♔g6 21.♘f4+ ♔f5 22.♘xe2 ♗e6 the simplifications led to a slightly better endgame for White.

12. ♘e2-g3 d6-d5
13. c4-c5 ♘b6-c8
14. 0-0 c7-c6
15. f2-f4!? ...

He opts for a decisive attack, but positional play with 15.h3 ♗e6 16.♗f4 would have been more in keeping with the setup and would have guaranteed a stable advantage.

15. ... ♗e7-h4
16. f4-f5 ♗h4xg3
17. h2xg3 f7-f6

It was indeed better to apply the brakes on the pawn, although after 17...♖e8 18.f6! gf 19.♗g5!! (19...fg? 20.♖xf7!) he can defend with 19...♖e6 20.♗h4 ♕f8 21.♖ae1 ♘e7.

18. ♖f1-f4 h7-h5
19. ♘c3-d1 ♘c8-e7
20. ♘d1-f2 ♕d8-d7

20...♗xf5!? 21.♖xf5 ♘xf5 22.♕xf5 ♕e8 deserved consideration, in order to bring up the queen's rook to the defense of the king via d8 and d7.

21. ♘f2xg4 h5xg4
22. ♖a1-f1 ♖a8-e8
23. ♗e3-d2 ...

Two moves later Antipov returns the bishop to its initial position, and it is logical to consider the immediate 23.♗c1!? It would be risky for Black to play the same way as in the game analyzed – 23...g5?! 24.fg ♔g7 25.♕d2. Also, 23...♘c8 24.♖xg4 g5 25.♗xg5! fg? 26.♖xg5+ ♔h8 27.♖h5+ ♔g8 28.f6 is quite

inappropriate, although after 25... ♕g7! 26.♕d1 fg 27.♕d2 ♕e7 28. ♖xg5+ ♔f7 Black plans to exchange queens and shouldn't lose.

23.	**...**	**g7-g5!**
24.	**f5xg6**	**♔g8-g7**
25.	**♗d2-c1**	**♘e7xg6**
26.	**♖f4-f5**	**♘g6-e7**



White got frustrated in his attempt to find a winning line (which wasn't surprising, as there wasn't one) and he ended the game with a loud bang.

27.	**♗c1-h6+!?**	**♔g7xh6**
28.	**♖f5-h5+!**	**♔h6xh5**
29.	**♕d3-h7+**	**♔h5-g5**
30.	**♕h7-g7+**	**♔g5-h5**
31.	**♕g7-h7+**	

½ - ½

Game 51

S.Cicak – E.Solozhenkin

Rethymno 2003

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
4.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
5.	**e5xd6**	**e7xd6**
6.	**♘b1-c3**	**♗f8-e7**
7.	**♗f1-d3**	**♘b8-c6**
8.	**♘g1-e2**	**0-0**



9. 0-0 ♗e7-f6

Caution! 9...♘b4 10.♗b1 ♘xc4?? 11.a3 ♘c6 12.♕d3 leaves Black a piece down (Sermek – Raspor, Portoroz 1996). Therefore, chasing the bishop away is more or less pointless.

Black occasionally offers to swap bishops via 9...♖e8 10.b3 ♗g5. After 11.d5 ♘b4 12.a3 ♘xd3 13.♕xd3 ♘d7 14.♗xg5 ♕xg5 15.f4 ♘c5 16.♕f3 (16.♕xh7+!? ♔xh7 17.fg ♘xb3 18.♖ae1 ♗g4) 16...♕g6 17.b4 ♗g4 18.f5 ♕h5 19.♕g3 ♗xe2 20.♘xe2 Grandmaster Degraeve outplayed the less seasoned Moingt (France 2010), and 20...♕xe2 21.bc ♕xc4 22.cd ♕c5+ 23.♔h1 ♕xd6 promised him an extra pawn in a rook ending. White should have preferred 11.♖e1, so that the bishop exchange would be followed by ♘c3-b5.

10. b2-b3 ...

10.♗e3 usually leads to positions in the current game or in the previous one. Although the reply 10...d5?! led to catastrophe in the game J.-N. Riff – Landenbergue (Switzerland 2010): 11.c5 ♘c4 12.♗xc4 dc 13.♕a4 ♗e6 14.♖fd1 ♘e7 15.♘f4 ♕d7 16.♕xd7 ♗xd7 17.♘e4 b5? 18.♘xf6+ gf 19.d5 ♖fd8 20.♘h5 ♗f5 21.♘xf6+ ♔g7 22.♘h5+ ♔g6 23.♘f4+ ♔f6 24.♗d4+ ♔g5 25.g3. That said, 17...♗h4! 18.g3 ♗f5! 19.f3 ♗xe4 20.fe ♗g5 would have given Black the chance to escape.

10. ... ♗c8-g4

11. ♗c1-e3 ♖f8-e8

In the game Lobzhanidze – Mladenov (France 2011) Black miscalculated with 11...♕d7 12.f3 ♖ae8?? 13.♘e4 (threatening 14.♘xf6+ gf 15.♗h6).

12. ♕d1-d2 ...

The idea is to unpin the knight on e2 without weakening his pawn structure with f2-f3. White is often happy to turn to similar harmonious setups.

12. ... ♗g4-h5

Solozhenkin switches his bishop to the b1-h7 diagonal. During the short period that he dabbled in the Alekhine Defense Carlsen against Ivanchuk in a blitz game (Moscow 2007) followed the template: 12...d5 13.c5 ♗xe2 14.♗xe2 ♘c8 15.♖fe1 ♘8e7 16.♗g4! (stopping the knight from getting to f5 without blocking the d-file) 16...g6 17.♖e2 ♗g7 18.♖ae1 ♘f5 (18...b6!?) 19.♗xf5 gf 20.♗h6 ♖xe2 21.♘xe2 ♕f6 22.♗xg7 ♕xg7 23.♖d1 ♖e8 24.f3 ♘e7 25.♘g3 ♕f6 26.♖e1 ♔f8 27.♖e5 – the weakness on d4 is no longer felt, but there are clear problems with the pawn on f5. Lakdawala recommends 21...♗xh6 22.♕xh6 ♕e7 intending to reach an acceptable knight endgame after 23.♕d2 ♖e8 24.♔f1 ♕h4 25.♕f4 ♕xf4 26.♘xf4 ♖xe1+ 27.♔xe1.

Timman versus Naiditsch (Dortmund 2002) preferred to advance with the neighboring pawn: 12...♘b4 13.♗b1 ♗xe2 14.♘xe2 c5 15.a3 ♘c6 16.♖a2 ♕e7 (16...cd!? 17.♘xd4 d5 18.c5 ♘xd4 19.♗xd4 ♘d7 20.b4 ♗xd4 21.♕xd4 ♘f6) 17.h3 g6 18.d5 ♘e5 19.♕c1 ♗g7 20.a4 ♘bd7 21.♘c3 f5 22.♗g5 ♗f6 23.♗xf6 ♕xf6. Black has obtained a comfortable position, which is harder to achieve with 15.♗f5 and ♖a1-e1.

13. ♘e2-f4 ♗h5-g6

14. ♘f4xg6 h7xg6

15. ♗d3-e4 ...

Tazbir's bishop (in his game versus Jugelt, Germany 2010) made a long pilgrimage all over the board until it was swapped for an enemy knight: 15.♗c2 ♘b4 16.♗d1 c6 17.♗f3 d5 18.c5 ♘c8 19.♗e2 a5 (avoiding having his pawns doubled after 20.a3) 20.♗g4 ♗e7 21.♗xc8 ♕xc8 22.a3 ♘a6 23.♘a4 ♗d8 24.♗f4 ♕f5 25.f3 g5 26.♗e5. White's manoeuvres don't contradict the strategic rules but his

advantage has virtually disappeared due to the lost time.

15. ... ♖a8-b8
16. g2-g4!? ...

Taking on c6 was the obvious move, but true to his aggressive style Cicak goes for a pawn storm on the kingside, even though it isn't in keeping with this variation. Solozhenkin replied by calming manoeuvring on the queenside, counting on his defense being strong enough. That said, Black's lack of space prevents him from enjoying any counterplay.

16. ... ♘c6-b4
17. ♗e4-g2 ♘b4-a6
18. ♖a1-d1 c7-c6
19. g4-g5 ♗f6-e7
20. f2-f4 ...

White is counting on the f-file, although it would have been better to attack the bishop with 20.♗f4 (and then d4-d5 if given the chance)

20. ... d6-d5
21. c4-c5 ♘b6-d7
22. f4-f5 ♘d7-f8
23. ♖f1-f3 g6xf5
24. ♖f3xf5 g7-g6

The variation 24...♘c7 25.♖df1 ♘ce6 26.♖xf7 ♗xg5 is dangerous at first glance but in reality it maintains a dynamic equality.

25. ♖f5-f3 ♘f8-e6
26. h2-h4 ♖e8-f8
27. ♗g2-h3 ♘a6-c7
28. ♖d1-f1 b7-b6
29. c5xb6 ...

29.b4 was more accurate, so as not to let the black bishop out of jail.

29. ... a7xb6
30. ♕d2-f2 c6-c5?!

Solozhenkin clearly missed White's 32nd move. He needed to play 30...♗b4 31.♘e2 ♖be8.

31. ♖f3xf7! c5xd4?

Black's position was already difficult, but 31...♕d6 32.♘e2 ♖be8 would have left him with some chances. Now, however, the queen unexpectedly moves away from its own battery and smashes Black along the diagonal.

32. ♕f2-c2!! ♖f8xf7
33. ♕c2xg6+ ♖f7-g7
34. ♗h3xe6+ ♘c7xe6
35. ♕g6xe6+ ♔g8-h8
36. ♗e3xd4 ♗e7-c5
37. ♕e6-h6+
1-0

The setup with ♗d3+♘ge2 is perfect! White finds a good square for his king's bishop and Black simply doesn't have the time to place the opposing bishop via a roundabout way on the b1-h7 diagonal while simultaneously implementing his plan to block and besiege the d4 pawn. White is guaranteed somewhat the better prospects, and the number of 5...ed adherents has decreased significantly.

Part 10 The Exchange System with 5...cd. The classics

Chapter 49. Various 6th moves

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**e5xd6**	**c7xd6**



This is the best choice if Black wants to grab the initiative instead of being happy with gradually achieving equality in a game with the e-file open. Black's backward pawn is an obvious drawback, so he attempts to move it rapidly to the fifth rank or else build it into a light-squared pawn chain after d6-d5 and e7-e6.

This chapter considers several 6th moves, while Chapter 50 focuses on 6.d5. After that we will turn to the main move, 6.♘c3.

6. ♘g1-f3 ...

6.b3 leads to variations from Game 52. The continuation 6.a4 g6 7.a5 ♘6d7 is identical to that considered earlier via the move order 3.c4 ♘b6 4.a4 d6 5.a5 ♘6d7 6.ed cd 7.d4 g6 (see the commentary on Game 23 Kurayan – Nestorovic), but other moves (6.♗e2, 6.h3, 6.♗d3, 6.♗e3) all transpose into 6.♘c3 lines (or, occasionally, 6.♘f3). There are also a couple of original ideas after 6.♗e3 g6. Firstly, there is an aggressive march of the rook's pawn in 7.h4 ♗g7 8.h5 ♘c6 9.♘c3 d5 10.c5 ♘c4 11.♗xc4 dc 12.♘ge2 ♕a5 13.h6 ♗f6 14.0-0 (Davies – Westerinen, Oslo 1988) 14...♗g4 15.♘e4 0-0-0 16.f3 ♗f5 – the king escapes to the opposite flank with reasonable prospects. Secondly, moving the bishop to the long diagonal was tried, in particular, by Nakamura versus Shabalov (USA 2007): 7.d5 ♗g7 8.♗d4 ♗xd4 9.♕xd4 0-0 10.h4. If 10...e6 followed by exchanging on

d5 then the white king is no better than Black's.

6. ... ♗c8-g4

After 6...g6 7.♗e3 ♗g7 8.♗e2 0-0 9.0-0 the bishop's development to g4 leads to the main line. Black should choose one of the lines to advance in the center. If 9...♘c6 10.♘bd2 d5 11.c5 ♘d7 12.♕b3 e5!? 13.♕xd5 ed 14.♘xd4 ♘xd4 15.♗xd4 ♘xc5 16.♕xd8 ♖xd8 17.♗xc5 ♖xd2 18.♖ad1 ♖xd1 19.♖xd1 ♗e6 Ju. Rotshtein – Loginov, corr. 1993, the ending is totally equal. Which is not true of the endgame after 10...e5 11.de de 12.♗c5 ♖e8 13.♘e4 ♕xd1 14.♖axd1 ♗g4 15.h3 ♗xf3 16.♗xf3 ♘xc4 17.b3 f5 18.bc fe 19.♗xe4 ♖ac8 20.♗e3 ♖c7 21.♗d5+ ♔h8 22.♗xc6 bc 23.♖d2 Seret – Hauchard, Toulouse 1995, but 14...♘d4 15.♘xd4 ed 16.♘g3 d3! 17.♖xd3 ♗xb2 significantly improves Black's play.

7. ♗f1-e2 ...

If 7.h3 ♗xf3 8.♕xf3 ♘c6 the standard pressure on the d4-pawn solves all of Black's opening problems. For example, 9.♗e3 g6 10.♘c3 ♗g7 11.♖d1 0-0 12.c5 dc 13.dc ♘d7 14.♗b5?! ♕a5! 15.♗xc6 (15.♖xd7 ♗xc3+ 16.bc ♕xb5 17.♕e2 ♕b1+ 18.♖d1 ♕f5) 15...♘e5! 16.♕e4 ♘xc6 17.0-0 ♖fd8 18.♕c4 ♕b4 19.♕xb4 ♘xb4 20.a3 ♗xc3 21.bc ♘c2 22.♗c1 ♔f8, and only Black has the chance to realize his ambitions, Mahjoob – Dzhumaev, Abu Dhabi 2004.

7. ... g7-g6

7...♘c6 is seen in Game 53, while 7...e6 is considered elsewhere via the move order 4.♘f3 ♗g4 5.♗e2 e6.

8. ♗c1-e3 ...

8.♕b3 (with the idea of c4-c5) fails to flush out the disadvantages of the early development of Black's queen's bishop due to 8...♗g7 9.c5 ♗e6 10.♕a3 ♘d5.

8. ... ♗f8-g7

9. ♘b1-d2 ...

9.♘c3 should not be considered as just leading to the lines with 6.♘c3, as it used to be the main line of the Exchange System, at least at 'pre-Voronezh' times.

9. ... 0-0

10. 0-0 ...

It is a little too early to play 10.h3, as after 10...♗xf3 11.♘xf3 ♘c6 12.d5 ♘e5 White does not have time to centralize his knight due to the hanging pawn on c4 and does not gain any of the advantages normally associated with d4-d5. Even with the knights set up advantageously White should not sacrifice such a valuable tempo.

10. ... ♘b8-c6

Here 10...d5 does not accord Black the usual counterplay against the blocked pawn due to 11.c5 ♘c8 12.♕b3 b6 13.♗f4.

11. d4-d5 ...

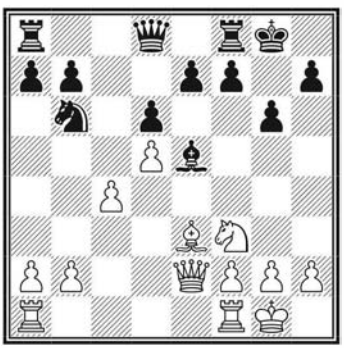
11.♖c1 should be met by a pawn push in the center. ♘ot 11...d5?! (due to 12.c5 ♘c8 13.♕b3 ♕d7 14.♗b5), but 11...e5. After 12.d5 ♘e7 13.h3 ♗xf3 14.♘xf3 h6 15.♕b3

♘f5 16.♖fd1 ♘d7 Apicella – Hauchard, Montpellier 1991, then exchanging on e3, f7-f5 and e5-e4 Black has no bad pieces left to worry about.

11. ... ♘c6-e5

This move was played half a century ago, while later players adopted a slight improvement by first exchanging the bishop. If 11... ♗xf3 12.♘xf3 ♘e5 13.♘d2 ♘ed7 14.♖b1 ♘f6 15.b4 ♘bd7 Priborsky – Slaby, Pardubice 2005, the shuffling of the knights brings Black close to equality.

12. ♘f3xe5 ♗g4xe2
13. ♕d1xe2 ♗g7xe5
14. ♘d2-f3 ...



Bronstein – Bagirov (Leningrad 1963) continued 14...♗g7 15.♖ad1 ♘d7 16.b3 ♖e8 17.♘d4 a6 18.f4 e5?! 19.de fe 20.♘f3 ♘f6 21.♘g5 b5 22.♗d4. White's advantage continuously grew, and Black's eventual success in the game was quite by chance. Our evaluation of this line is unchanged by the game Vasiukov – Orev, Kislovodsk 1968: 14...♗f6 15.♖ac1 a5 16.♘d4 ♘d7 17.♖fd1 ♘c5 18.♘b5 ♕d7 19.♗d4 ♖fe8 20.♕e3 ♖ac8 21.♗xf6 ef 22.♕f4 ♘e4 23.h3 where Black has numerous weaknesses.

Game 52
A.Karpov – R.Vaganian
Leningrad 1969

The battle between these two talented youths for the Soviet championship did not reach the international chess press. This exciting fight ended without a winner, while the initial moves were not relevant: 4.♘f3 g6 5.♗e2 ♗g7 6.0-0 0-0 7.b3 (a very rare move) 7...♘c6 8.c4 ♘b6 9.ed cd 10.♗b2 ♗g4. But eventually the game transposed back into the Exchange System, to a position that deserves certain attention.

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
5. e5xd6 c7xd6
6. b2-b3 ...



After completing his fianchetto White counts on opening the game for the bishop with d4-d5. Otherwise, the bishop will merely defend the d4-pawn (which is often the case in the main lines when the bishop stands on e3).

6. ... g7-g6
7. ♗c1-b2 ♗f8-g7
8. ♘g1-f3 ...

Advancing the d-pawn does not guarantee any advantage. Although after 8.♘c3 0-0 9.♖c1 ♘c6 10.d5 ♘d4 11.♘ge2 ♗g4 12.h3 ♗xe2 13.♗xe2 e5 14.de fe 15.0-0 d5 16.cd ed (Blaha – Neckar, Czech Republic 2009) 17.♘b5 ♘xb5 18.♗xg7 ♔xg7 19.♗xb5 Black's passed pawn is insufficient compensation for the shaky position of his king. The best improvement here is 11...e5 12.de ♘xe6 and Black has an advantage in development.

8. ... 0-0

This and the next two moves can be played in any order. If White plays h2-h3 to prevent the bishop from getting to g4 then Black can happily develop it on f5.

9. ♗f1-e2 ...

White sometimes vary the game, as, for example, in Uta – Gozzoli, Vienna 2011: 9.♗d3 ♗g4 10.♘bd2 ♘c6 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♘xf3 d5 13.♗e2 dc 14.bc (**hanging pawns appear in the Alekhine Defense at Black's whim and usually work to his benefit.** Therefore, White should have kept the position closed with 13.c5.) 14...♕d7 15.0-0 ♖fd8 16.c5 ♘d5 17.♗c4 e6 18.♖b1 ♕c7 19.♕e2 h6 20.♖fd1 ♖d7 21.♗b5 ♖ad8. Relatively solid – this is what you can say about White's position, at best.

9. ... ♘b8-c6
10. 0-0 ♗c8-g4

Karpov and Vaganian had actually reached this position before! In the USSR team championship (Riga 1968) the future world champion immediately went for harassing the bishop: 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♗xf3 d5 13.c5 ♘c8 14.♕d2 e6 15.b4 a6 16.a4 ♘8e7 17.♘a3 ♘f5 18.♘c2 h5 19.b5 ♘a5 20.♕b4 ♘c4 21.♗e2? (21.♖fd1 was correct, preventing his opponent from opening the center) 21...a5 22.♕c3 ♘xb2 23.♕xb2, and now 23...♖c8 followed by e6-e5 was clearly better for Black.

11. ♕d1-d2 e7-e6
12. ♘b1-a3 d6-d5
13. ♖f1-d1 ...

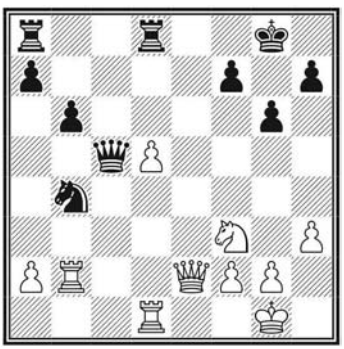
In such cases, one should definitely take into account centralization of the knight. Here 13.♘e5 is harmless due to 13... ♗xe2 14.♕xe2 ♘xe5 15.de dc 16.♖fd1 ♕e7 17.♘xc4 ♘xc4 18.♕xc4 ♖fd8.

13. ... d5xc4
14. ♘a3xc4 ♘b6xc4
15. b3xc4 ♕d8-b6
16. ♖a1-b1 ♗g4-f5
17. ♗e2-d3 ♗f5xd3
18. ♕d2xd3 ♖f8-d8

The above note on the hanging pawns is valid here as well. The following variation is instructive:

19.♕c2 ♕a6! 20.d5?! ♕xa2 21.dc bc 22.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 23.♘e1 ♖b8 24.♘d3 ♕b3, and the unpleasant horizontal pin is transformed into an 'eternal' vertical one. White breaks through the center without further ado.

19. d4-d5!?	**♗g7xb2**
20. ♕d3-e2	**e6xd5**
21. c4xd5	**♘c6-b4**
22. ♖b1xb2	**♕b6-c5**
23. h2-h3	**b7-b6**



24. d5-d6!? ...

Karpov did not want to draw with 24.♘g5!? ♖xd5 25.♘xf7! ♔xf7 26.♖xb4! or, what was more likely, did not see this hidden tactic. In any case, the pin along the d-file gives him certain hopes.

24. ...	**♖d8xd6**
25. ♖d1xd6	**♕c5xd6**
26. ♕e2-e4	**♘b4-d5**
27. ♖b2-d2	**♖a8-d8**
28. ♘f3-e5	**♕d6-c5**

Chasing the knight from the center does not yet mean untangling himself! If 28...♕e6 29.♕d4 f6 30.♘g4 ♕e1+ 31.♔h2 ♔f7 it would be bad to continue 32.♘xf6?! ♘e3!, and even more so 32.♘e3? ♘xe3, but White can get an obvious draw with 32.♕b2 (intending 33.♖xd5!), and also via 32.♖d3 ♕c1 33.♘xf6 ♘e3 34.♕xd8 ♘f1+ 35.♔g1 ♘d2+.

29. ♕e4-f3	**f7-f5**
30. h2-h4	**♖d8-d6**
31. ♖d2-d1	**♔g8-g7**

This game is a parade of pins, both actually played and the hidden ones! After 31...♘c7 32.♕b3+ ♘e6 33.♖e1 a diagonal pin is also set. And Black can only get out of it with 33...♕d5, at the cost of his extra pawn.

32. h4-h5	**♔g7-f6**
33. h5xg6	**h7xg6**
34. ♕f3-g3	**♔f6-g7**
35. ♕g3-g5?!	**...**

It seems that both players were in time trouble. Karpov had cleverly undermined the black king's bunker and via 35.♔h2 and 36.f4 would have easily maintained equality. Now however, the knight moves away from the center and Vaganian little by little gets away.

35. ...	**♖d6-e6**
36. ♘e5-f3	**♘d5-f6**
37. ♖d1-c1	**♕c5-e7**
38. ♕g5-f4	**♖e6-d6**
39. ♖c1-e1	**♘f6-e4?!**

39...♕d7 40.♘e5 ♕d8 was correct. Black rushed to centralize his own knight, and Karpov finally reestablishes the equilibrium.

40. g2-g4!	**♕e7-f6**
41. g4-g5	**♕f6-e7**

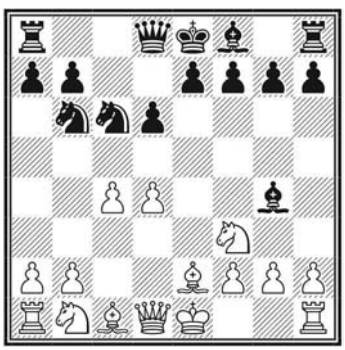
42. ♔g1-g2 ♔g7-g8
43. ♖e1-h1 ♕e7-g7
44. ♖h1-c1 ♕e7-b7
45. ♖c1-h1
½ - ½

Game 53
A.Sokolov – R.Vaganian
Minsk 1986

It would be a sin to ignore such a clear and yet instructive game (which came just a bit too late to make it into Bagirov's monograph).

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
5. e5xd6 c7xd6
6. ♘g1-f3 ♗c8-g4
7. ♗f1-e2 ♘b8-c6

The actual move order was slightly different – 4.♘f3 ♘c6 5.c4 ♘b6 6.♗e2 ♗g4 7.ed cd (instead of the more precise 7...ed). Since 6.♗e2 is not seen frequently either, we analyze this game here.



8. d4-d5! ...

In such a structure it is strategically advantageous for White to grab space, while Black should let him do so only if he takes concrete countermeasures. Obviously, castling is actually a listless move due to 8...d5 9.c5 ♘d7, as the knight has not yet developed to c3, and the pawn on d5 is not left hanging.

8. ... ♗g4xf3
9. ♗e2xf3 ♘c6-e5
10. ♗f3-e2 g7-g6
11. ♗c1-e3 ...

The winner commented on the game in Chess Informant together with the Cuban master Armas. The comment 11.f4? ♘exc4 12.♗xc4 ♘xc4 13.♕a4+ ♕d7 14.♕xc4 ♖c8 and Black wins is clearly a misunderstanding. The obvious double attack, 13.♕d4, leaves White a piece up. So in practice all the players have retreated the attacked knight to d7, hence moving the pawn is not an immediate priority.

11. ... ♗f8-g7
12. ♗e3-d4 ...

The bishop finds its best square in the center, working on the key diagonals. White has a clear advantage.

12. ... 0-0
13. ♘b1-c3 ...

13.♘a3 is also fine. Attempts to break free by Black only worsen his position: 13...f5 14.f4 ♘ed7 15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.♘b5 ♖f6 17.0-0 e6 18.de ♖xe6 19.♗f3 Van der Wiel – Noordhoek, Hilversum 2008.

13. ... ♖a8-c8

14. b2-b3 e7-e6
15. f2-f4 ...

Sokolov had obviously anticipated the ensuing complications and assessed that they were to his favor. The variation with 15.de fe 16.0-0 d5 17.cd ♘xd5 18.♘xd5 ed 19.♕d2 would have kept a positional advantage for White and was a worthy alternative.

15. ... e6xd5!?
16. f4xe5 d5xc4
17. 0-0 ...

Houdini prefers 17.♗g4!? and considers that White has an advantage in many lines, for example 17...♖c6 18.e6 fe 19.♗xe6+ ♔h8 20.♗xg7+ ♔xg7 21.♕d4+ ♕f6 22.♘e2.

17. ... d6xe5
18. ♗d4xb6 ♕d8xb6+
19. ♔g1-h1 ♖f8-d8

19...e4!? 20.♘d5 ♕e6 21.bc ♗xa1 22.♕xa1 f5 would lead to an unclear position. Maybe Vaganian should have gone for this.

20. ♘c3-d5 ♕b6-c5
21. b3xc4 b7-b5
22. ♖a1-c1 ...

This move has been assigned an exclamation mark by the commentators, but is that evaluation correct?! After 22.♕b3!? bc 23.♗xc4 ♕xc4 24.♘e7+ ♔h8 25.♘xc8 ♕xb3 26.ab ♖xc8 27.♖xf7 e4 28.♖b1 ♖e8 29.♖xa7 e3 30.♖a2 ♗c3 31.♖e2 ♗d2 Black will find it very difficult to defend the ending. While if Black avoids simplifications then White should consolidate (23...♔h8 24.♘e3 f5 25.♖ad1).

22. ... ♗g7-h6
23. ♗e2-g4 ♗h6xc1?!

Sokolov and Armas are correct to consider 23...f5 to be the best move here, but their illustrative variations need to be refined. 24.♗xf5! gf 25.♘f6+ ♔h8 26.♕h5 ♕f8 actually maintains equality, but another good move is 25...♔g7. If 26.♕h5! ♗xc1? 27.♕xh7+ ♔f8 28.♕xf5 (28.♘e4! is even better) Black's position is bad, but he can improve and gain equal chances with 26... ♕e7! 27.♖xf5 ♖xc4 28.♖e1 ♖f4 or 28...♖f8.

24. ♗g4xc8 ♗c1-g5
25. ♕d1-f3 ♖d8-f8!?

Vaganian keeps the bishop alive in order to pick up three pawns in its place. Sokolov and Armas demonstrate that 25...♖xc8? 26. ♕xf7+ ♔h8 27.♘f6 ♗xf6 (27... ♕c7 28.♕xc7 ♖xc7 29.♘e8) 28. ♕xf6+ ♔g8 29.♕e6+ ♔h8 30.♖f7 leads to defeat, while 25...♕xc8 26.♕xf7+ ♔h8 27.♘f6 ♗xf6 28. ♕xf6+ ♔g8 29.♕f7+ ♔h8 30.cb leads to a tough position.

26. ♗c8-b7 b5xc4?

26...♕xc4 was necessary, preventing White's next move. Then, despite being a strong move, 27.♘c3 (followed by ♘c3-e4 or ♗b7-d5) would still not guarantee White victory.

27. ♕f3-g3 f7-f6
28. h2-h4 ♗g5-d2
29. ♖f1xf6 ♖f8xf6

30. ♘d5xf6+ ♔g8-g7
31. ♘f6-e4 ♕c5-e3
32. ♕g3xe3 ...

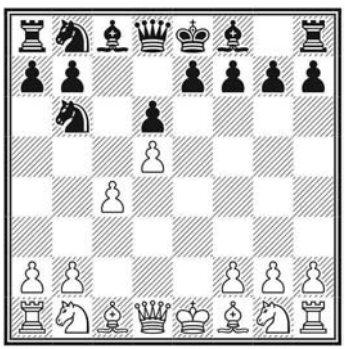
A practical solution, although 32.♕xe5+ ♔h6 33.♕e7 ♕f4 34.♘xd2 ♕xd2 35.♕f8+ ♔h5 36.g3 gains higher evaluations from the computers.

32. ... ♗d2xe3
33. ♗b7-d5 c4-c3
34. ♗d5-b3 ♗e3-d2
35. ♔h1-g1
1-0

After 6.♘f3 we do not recommend going for the ♗c8-g4 pin before the queen's knight develops. If 6.b3, Black is guaranteed good play with the most natural play, as moving the bishop to b2 can hardly be justified.

Chapter 50. 6.d5

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
5. e5xd6 c7xd6
6. d4-d5 ...



Advancing the pawn in the center has both positives and negatives. White gains space and can meet 6...g6 with the troublesome 7.♕d4. However, his pawn chain loses its elastic quality and Black can exploit the important c5- and e5-squares.

6. ... e7-e5

Most often, Black plays e5 straight away, disputing to some extent his opponent's territorial advantage. But is Black totally forbidden from playing 6...g6 7.♕d4? Not at all! Even favorable to White course of events in Svoboda – Konopka (Czech Republic 2013) brought him only an insignificant advantage: 7...f6 8.♘c3 e5 9.♕h4 ♘a6 10.♗d3 f5 11.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 12.b3 ♘b4 13.♗b1 ♗g7 14.♘ge2 e4 15.0-0 ♗d7 16.♗e3 ♖e8 17.a3 ♘d3 18.♖d1 ♘e5 19.h3 ♔c7 20.♗c2. 7...♖g8 is more promising, and play can continue 8.♘c3 ♗g7 9.♕h4 h6 (9...♗xc3+!? 10.bc h5) 10.♘f3 ♗f5 11.♗d2 ♘a6 12.♖c1 ♘c5 13.g4 g5 14.♕h3 ♗g6 15.♗e2 ♕d7 Landa – Dutreeuw, Belgium 2009 – Black hides his king away on the queenside and his powerful bishops ensure him an advantage. A more precise move order is 8.♕h4

h5 9.♘c3 ♗g7 10.♗d2, but here we do not see any real advantage for White either. Nevertheless, Black sometimes continues 6...♘8d7 (as in Game 54), in order to block the long diagonal with the knight if necessary.

Black can also undermine the center with 6...e6 followed by the subsequent exchange, this line is analyzed in our book via the move order 5...ed 6.d5 ♗e7 7.♗d3 e6 8.♘c3 ed cd 9.cd. This is good for Black, but sometimes he nevertheless avoids this exchange. Then White can play 7.♘c3 ♗e7 8.♗d3 0-0 9.♘ge2 ♘a6 10.a3 ♘c5 11.♗c2 a5 12.♗e3 ed 13.cd ♗g4 14.0-0 ♗h5 (Dobosz – Zelcic, Austria 2007) 15.♕b1 ♗g6 16.♗xg6 hg 17.b4 ♘cd7 18.♕b3 with very modest progress on the queenside.

7. ♘b1-c3 ...

7.de?! ♗xe6 8.♘c3 only creates an illusion of play against the weak pawn – it will inevitably move ahead. Black can continue 8...♗e7 9.♗e3 0-0 10.b3 d5 11.cd?! (11.c5 ♘6d7 12.♘xd5 ♗xc5 13.♗c4 was the lesser evil) 11...♘xd5 12.♘xd5 ♗xd5 13.f3 (13.♘f3 ♗b4+ 14.♘d2 ♖e8) 13...♖e8 14.♔f2 ♗g5 15.♗xg5 ♕xg5 16.♕c1 ♕h4+ 17.g3 ♕d4+ 18.♔g2 ♘c6 19.♗c4 ♗xc4 20.bc ♘b4 and Black is winning, V.Mrva – Szablowski, Krakow 2010.

7. ... ♗f8-e7

With the pawn on e5 the bishop fianchetto is not attractive. Anyway, it is not forbidden to occupy the long diagonal later. See an example of how Vladimir Bagirov handled this position versus Fuellgrabe, Berlin 1995: 7...a5 8.♘f3 ♘a6 9.♗e2 ♗e7 10.0-0 0-0 11.b3 ♗f5 12.♗e3 ♘d7 13.♗d3 ♗xd3 14.♕xd3 f5 15.♕e2 ♗f6 16.♘b5 ♕e7 17.♖ab1 ♖ae8 18.♕c2 g6. White's position does not deserve Houdini's compliment: Black's chances on the kingside are at the very least no worse than White's chances on the queenside.

8. ♗f1-d3 ...

Developing the bishop more modestly fails to cause Black any problems at all: 8.♗e2 0-0 9.♘f3 ♗f5 (9...♗g4!? 10.♘d2 ♗xe2 11.♕xe2 f5 12.0-0 ♘a6) 10.0-0 ♘8d7 11.b3 ♘c5 12.♗a3 e4 13.♘d4 ♗g6 14.b4?! (it would have been better to exchange bishops via 14.♗h5, which would weaken the advanced pawn) 14...♘d3 15.♘xe4 (Kriebel – Markos, Slovakia 2011) 15...♘f4! 16.♘g3 ♘xe2+ 17.♕xe2 ♖e8 with a threatening initiative for the pawn.

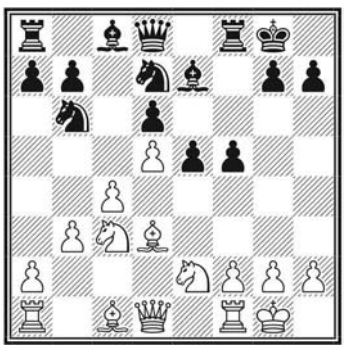
And we have even less faith in opening up play via 8.f4 ef 9.♗xf4 0-0 10.♗d3 ♖e8 11.♘ge2 Tazbir – A. Barthel, Bad Homburg 2011. The manoeuvre 11...♗h4+ 12.g3 ♗f6 13.♘b5 ♗e5 followed by exchanging the bishops highlights multiple breaches in White's camp.

8. ... 0-0
9. ♘g1-e2 f7-f5
10. b2-b3 ♘b8-d7

From this square, the knight is

ready to move in various directions, whereas after 10...♘a6 it can only reach c5. After 11.0-0 ♗d7 12.f3 ♖c8 13.♗e3 ♘c5 14.♗c2 a5 15.♕d2 ♗f6 16.♖ae1 ♕c7 17.♔h1 ♖ce8 18.f4 Landenbergue – Adams, Garmisch Partenkirchen 1994, objectively the best move 18...e4 practically destroys Black's chances of victory. Obviously, this is better than 10...g5?! 11.g4!? e4 12.♗c2 ♗f6 13.gf ♗xf5 14.♖g1 h6? 15.h4 Kersten – Pajeken, Cuxhaven 2000, and the unprepared pawn storm is crushed.

11. 0-0 ...



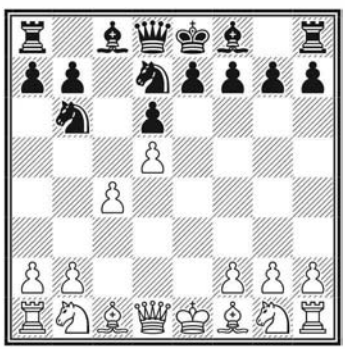
We have now reached a very complicated position. Black has a lot of options here and they belong to three principally different categories. Firstly, maneuvering in anticipation of f2-f4 (in which case e5-e4 is the most reliable choice). Further, there is the extremely dubious 11...g5?!, with a continuation something along the lines of 12.f3 ♘c5 13.♗c2 ♗d7 14.♗e3 ♕e8 (Berescu – M.Grunberg, Timisoara 1994) 15.♗xc5 dc 16.d6 ♗d8 17.♘d5 – only White has chances to win here. Krasenkow versus Huschenbeth (Germany 2007) preferred preventive action with his central pawn. The game continued 11...e4 12.♗c2 ♗f6 13.f4 ef 14.♖xf3 ♘e5 15.♖f1 g6 16.♖b1 ♖e8 17.h3 ♗d7 18.♘d4 ♕e7 19.♘ce2 ♘f7 20.♗b2 ♘g5 21.♔h1 ♕g7, and if it were not for the fact that his knight was on b6 Black would have had a great position.

Game 54

R.Hess – H.Nakamura

USA 2007

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**e5xd6**	**c7xd6**
6.	**d4-d5**	**♘b8-d7**



7. ♗c1-e3 ...

The idea of Black's last move is demonstrated in Mazur – Xia Jie,

Livigno 2011: 7.♘c3 g6 8.♕d4 ♘f6 9.♗d3 ♗g7 10.♕h4 0-0 11.♘ge2 ♘bd7 12.0-0 a6 13.a4 ♕a5 14.♗c2 ♘e5 15.b3 ♗g4 16.f3 ♗d7 17.♗e3 ♕c7 18.a5. Black has not achieved equality here because he played too much of a waiting game and rejected 11... e6 12.de ♗xe6 (planning d6-d5). Landa versus De Jonghe (Belgium 2005) went for the preventive dark-squared fianchetto (which modestly recommended itself in our previous chapter): 7.b3 ♘f6 8.♗b2 g6 9.♗d3 ♗g7 10.♘e2 0-0 11.0-0 ♖e8 12.♘bc3 ♘bd7 13.♕d2 a6 14.♘g3 ♘a5 15.♖fe1. Once again, White is putting noticeable pressure on his opponent, and once again this is because Black failed to play 12... e6 13.de ♗xe6. **The 'bad' knight on b6 often does not actually need to be 'improved' in the structure that typically arises in this opening, as it provides strong support for the breakout with e7-e6.**

7. ... g7-g6
8. ♕d1-d2 ...

We already know how Black should play if faced with the most natural 8.♗d4 ♘f6 9.♘c3 ♗g7 10.♘f3 0-0 11.♗e2. Obviously, 11...e6!.

8. ... ♘d7-f6
9. ♘b1-c3 ♗c8-d7

In the light of the above, either Black now loses a tempo with e7-e6, or his knights lose their coordination if he does not undermine the center by playing it. So we do not get the point of the text move.

10. ♗f1-d3 ♗f8-g7
11. ♗e3-d4 0-0
12. ♘g1-e2 e7-e5

Hess' setup has provoked Black to make this central advance, which forces White to capture en passant (13.♗e3?! e4!).

13. d5xe6 f7xe6

Nakamura refuses to accept a loss of tempo – either out of stubbornness, or because in the event of 13...♗xe6 14.b3 d5 15.c5 ♘bd7 16.0-0 white pieces would be placed quite harmoniously.

14. 0-0 e6-e5

Combining d6-d5 with attacking along the diagonal b8-h2 is not promising for Black: 14...♕c7 15.b3 d5 16.cd ♘g4 17.g3 ♗xd4 18.♘xd4 ed 19.♖ac1. He ends up with a combination of a blocked isolated pawn together with unattractive pieces.

15. ♗d4-e3 ♗d7-c6
16. ♘e2-g3 ♔g8-h8
17. ♖a1-d1 ♕d8-e8

After 17...d5 18.cd ♘bxd5 the isolated pawn is firmly blocked on the light square – upon which White will have a lasting advantage. Hikaru preferred to patiently place all his major pieces on the best files, so his opponent now pushes forward.

18. c4-c5 d6xc5
19. ♗e3xc5 ♖f8-f7
20. ♘g3-e4 ♖a8-d8?!

Black pins with the wrong rook (20...♖d7 was correct). Hess now misses the tactic: 21.♘d6! ♖xd6

22.♗xd6 ♖d7 23.♕g5! ♖xd6 24.♗xg6 ♕f8 25.♖xd6 ♕xd6 26.♖d1 ♕f8 27.♕h4. Black has two minor pieces for a rook and a pawn, but the entire white army is much more active.

21. ♘e4xf6?! ♗g7xf6
22. ♕d2-e2 ♘b6-d5
23. ♘c3xd5 ♖d8xd5?!

The players were already very talented, but at the time still too young, and they allowed quite a number of slips in their game. After 23...♗xd5 24.♗xa7 ♕e6 the threat of b7-b6 enables Black to win the pawn back.

24. ♗c5xa7 ♖f7-d7
25. ♗d3-c2?! ...

Hess for some reason does not care about the extra pawn, rejecting 25.♗b6. Nakamura in his turn attacks the bishop from the wrong side (25...♖a5!).

25. ... ♕e8-a8?!
26. ♖d1xd5 ♗c6xd5
27. ♗a7-e3?! ...

27.♕b5! ♗c6 28.♕b6 e4 29.♖d1 ♖xd1+ 30.♗xd1 was stronger. The white pieces are positioned a bit randomly but still, a pawn is a pawn.

27. ... ♕a8xa2
28. ♕e2-b5 ♗d5-c6
29. ♕b5-b4 ♔h8-g7
30. ♗c2-e4 ♗d5xe4
31. ♕b4xe4 ♕a2xb2
32. g2-g4 ♕b2-c3
33. g4-g5 ♗f6-e7
34. ♖f1-c1 ♕c3-a5
35. ♗e3-c5! ...

Just as Black was enjoying his gains, White found a simple way to force a repetition of moves.

35. ... ♕a5-c7
36. ♗c5-a3 ♕c7-a5
37. ♗a3-c5 ♕a5-c7
½ - ½

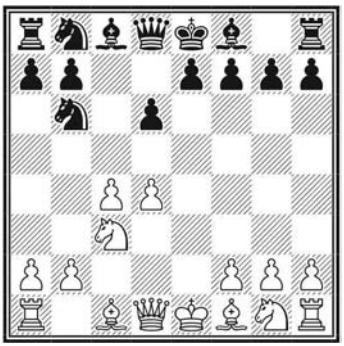
Almost any reply to 6.d5 is totally satisfactory for Black. Moreover, he can choose a structure that best suits his taste and it is quite unclear what White expects to gain from pushing his central pawn that early.

Chapter 51. Various replies to 6.♘c3

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
5. e5xd6 c7xd6
6. ♘b1-c3 ...

Diagram

There is no reason to reject this most natural continuation. The games normally develop from here according to one of the four scenarios. The setup that is the most effective versus 5...ed, i.e. with ♗f1-d3 and ♘g1-e2, is considered in Chapter 52. The line with 6...g6



7.♘f3 ♗g7 8.♗e2 ♗g4 is considered in Chapter 53. The prophylactic move 8.h3 (with Black's bishop probably developing on f5) is considered in Chapter 54. Finally, the Voronezh Variation is considered in Part 11, Chapters 55-57. Everything else, which for formal reasons does not belong to one of these setups, is analyzed here.

6. ... g7-g6

Caution! 6...♗f5 7.♕f3 ♕d7? unexpectedly loses to 8.c5 dc 9.♗b5 ♘c6 10.d5 winning the knight. Amazingly, this refutation was seen in Guven – Zito (Kemer 2007) in the world under-10 championship! Mark Dvoretsky, who is no fan of opening theory, outfought the more precise 7...♕c8 in a game against Platonov, Voronezh 1973. After 8.c5! dc 9.dc ♕xc5 10.♕xb7 ♗d7 11.♗e3 ♕c6 12.♕xc6 ♘xc6 13.♘f3 g6 14.♗b5 ♗g7 15.0-0 White enjoyed the pawn majority on the queenside. The talented master (who would later become a great trainer) could not imagine in his wildest dreams that the opening theory, in the 21st century, would be taught to juniors from day one!

If 6...♘c6 7.♗e3 ♗f5 White also reminds his opponent of the b7-pawn with 8.♕b3. The counterplay in the center is insufficient, as can be seen from the following example: 8...e5 9.♘f3 ♗e7 10.de de 11.c5 ♘d4 12.♘xd4 ed 13.♗b5+ ♔f8 14.cb de 15.fe ♕xb6 16.0-0. In practice Black usually responds with the Voronezh Variation – 7... g6 8.♖c1 ♗g7, and then 9.d5 or 9.b3.

It seems that 6...♘c6 fails to enable Black to equalize due to 7.d5 ♘e5 8.f4. In Lima – Pinto (Belem 2008) Black managed to blunder a piece straight away with 8...♗g4?? 9.♕c2 ♘g6 10.f5 ♘h4 11.♕e4. In the variation 8...♘g6 9.♕h5!? ♘d7 10.♗d3 ♘f6 11.♕e2 ♘h4 12.♕f2 ♘f5 Black gradually improves the position of his knights, but at the cost of delaying development.

7. a2-a4 ...

Pushing the a-pawn occurs in various lines of the Alekhine Defense and so deserves to be reviewed here. But in reply to 6... g6 it is worth looking at an attack from the other side – 7.h4. This was first played by a very young Tal (versus Shianovsky, Riga 1955), while an already widely-known Fischer defended this position from the black side (in a game with Ciocaltea, Havana 1965).

Nevertheless, these are not the best examples to follow, but rather Nyysti – Mertanen, Espoo 2001: 7...h6 8.♗e3 ♗g7 9.♕d2 ♘c6 10.d5 ♘e5 11.b3 h5 12.♘h3 a5 (this prevents White from castling queenside, which he can do after 12...♗xh3 13.♖xh3 ♘bd7 14.♗d4 ♘f6) 13.f4 ♘g4 14.♗d4 ♗xd4 15.♕xd4 0-0 16.♗d3 ♘h6 17.♘g5 ♗f5 18.♘ce4 ♘d7, and the attack is stopped. Another good example comes from the maltre in Mejers – V.Bagirov, Berlin 1991: 8.h5 g5 9.♗d3 ♘c6 10.♘ge2 ♗g7 11.♗e3 d5! 12.c5 ♘d7 (12...♘c4?! 13.♗xc4 dc 14.♕a4 ♗e6 15.♖d1, threatening d4-d5) 13.♖c1 ♘xc5 14.dc d4 15.♘xd4 ♗xd4 16.♕e2 ♗e6 17.0-0 ♗xe3 18.♕xe3 ♕d4 aiming at an equal endgame.

Among the games of strong players we occasionally find 7.♗g5 ♗g7 8.♖c1. Most often, Black chases the bishop to its more common square e3, and they arrive at usual positions with the extra move h7-h6 (although in practice it is not at all 'extra'). For example, 8...0-0 9.♗e2 h6 10.♗e3 d5 11.c5 ♘c4 12.♗xc4 dc 13.♘ge2 ♗f5 14.0-0 ♘c6 15.b3 ♗d3 16.bc ♗xc4 17.♕a4 ♗xe2 18.♘xe2 e5 19.de ♘xe5 20.♖b1 ♕c7 21.♕e4 b6 22.cb Jaracz – Miroshnichenko, Bad Wiessee 2004, with a draw in a totally equal position (22...ab 23.♖fc1 ♕d7).

Grandmaster Dvoirys tried 7.d5 ♗g7 8.♘ge2 with the idea of centralizing his knight (while avoiding the pin with ♗f8-g4). A worthy response by Black would be to advance the backward pawn. Although after 8...0-0 9.♘d4 e5 10.de fe 11.♗e2 ♘c6 12.♘f3 ♘a5 13.h4 ♘axc4 14.h5 d5 15.hg hg 16.♕c2 Dvoirys – Bratchenko, Oberwart 2003, White has an obvious initiative, Black could continue 10... ♗xe6 11.♘xe6 ♕e7!? 12.♗e2 ♕xe6 13.0-0 ♘c6 14.♘b5 ♖ad8 15.♖e1 ♕f6 16.♖b1 (Dvoirys – Svidler, Novgorod 1995) 16...a6 17.♘c3 d5! 18.cd ♘d4 19.♗e3 ♘xd5 with full equality.

The variation 7.c5 dc 8.♗b5+ ♗d7 9.dc ♗xb5 10.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 11.♘xb5 ♘a4 (with approximately equal play) is analyzed a little bit later in this book.

7. ... ♗f8-g7

In response to 7...a5, Yugoslav master Dragan Perovic came up back in 1986 with the interesting idea 8.c5!? dc 9.♗b5+. It would be wrong to follow the analogy with the move 7.c5, as after 9... ♗d7 10.dc ♗xb5 11.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 12.ab Black is in troubles. A critical position arises after 9... ♘6d7 10.♗f4 (10.dc ♗g7 11.♘f3 0-0 12.♗e3 ♘a6 13.c6 bc 14.♗xc6 ♖b8 15.♗b5 ♘c7 is sufficient only for equality) 10...♗g7 11.♘d5. Due to the threat of ♗f4-c7 Black usually hurries to return the extra pawn, although after 11...e5?! 12.♗xe5 ♗xe5 13.de 0-0 14.f4 the

centralized white army appears frightening. The correct way to make progress in the center is 11...♘a6! 12.♗xa6 e5! 13.♗b5 ef 14.♕e2+ ♔f8 15.♘f3 (Ansell – Cox, London 2000) 15...cd 16.0-0 ♘c5, where White has no compensation for the two pawns. In Salmensuu – Solozhenkin (Finland 2000) after 12.dc 0-0 13.♖c1 e6 14.♘c3 e5 15.♗e3 ♘dxc5 16.♘ge2 ♗e6 Black completed his development while retaining the extra pawn. If 12.♕e2 0-0 13.♘xe7+ ♔h8 14.d5 ♘c7 the position is unclear.

8. a4-a5 ...

It is best to drive the knight away straight off, so as to prevent a pin after ♘g1-f3. If 8.♘f3 ♗g4 9.♗e3 0-0 10.a5 ♘6d7 11.♗e2 a6 12.d5 (Davies – Tal, Tel-Aviv 1990) 12... ♗xf3 13.♗xf3 ♕c7 14.♕b3 ♘c5 15.♗xc5 ♕xc5 the chances are equal as it is unwise to take the pawn.

8. ... ♘b6-d7

9. ♖a1-a3!? ...

Black plans to win a pawn with ♘b8-c6xa5, so the rook's development is intended to meet Black's plan in full possession. ♘ote that after 9.♘f3 ♘c6 10.♖a3 ♘xa5 11.d5 b6 12.b4 ♘b7 13.♘d4 ♘b8 14.♘cb5 a5 (Hanley – M.Grunberg, Port Erin 2002) 15.♘c6 ♕d7 16.♕f3 0-0 17.♗e3, the knight ends up on a clumsy square as it escapes death, and White is at least equal.

9. ... 0-0

10. ♘g1-f3 ♘d7-f6

It is too early to play 10... e5, as after 11.♗e2 ♘c6 (if 11... ♖e8 12.♗g5 it is hard to find an acceptable reply for Black) 12.d5 ♘d4 13.♘xd4 ed 14.♘b5 Black fails to obtain sufficient compensation for the condemned pawn, Todorov – Rozentalis, Belgium 2013. 10...♘c6 11.d5 ♘b4 12.♗e2 ♘c5 13.0-0 ♗f5 14.♘b5 ♘c2 15.♖a2 comes into consideration, with either a draw by repetition or a continuation of the struggle after normal moves such as ♕d8-d7 or ♖f8-e8.

11. ♗f1-e2 ...

After 11.d5 e6 12.de ♗xe6 Black gets chances of his own by sieging the pawns on a5 and c4, or else by breaking open the center with d6-d5. If White plays 12.♗e2 ed 13.cd ♗g4 14.♗e3 ♘bd7 15.h3 ♗xf3 16.♗xf3 a6 17.0-0 ♕c7 18.♘a4 ♖ac8 19.♕d2 ♘e5 Guetas – Velicka, Balaguer 2003, then his pieces clearly lack coordination.

11. ... d6-d5

This is the right way for Black to fight for space. In J.-N. Riff – Bertrand (Vandoeuvre 2008) Black implemented what was principally the wrong plan: 11...♘bd7 12.0-0 e5 13.♗e3 ♘g4?! 14.♗g5 f6 15.♗c1 f5 16.♘b5 ♕e7 17.♘g5 ♘df6 18.h3 ♘h6 19.c5!, tearing Black's position apart.

12. 0-0 ...

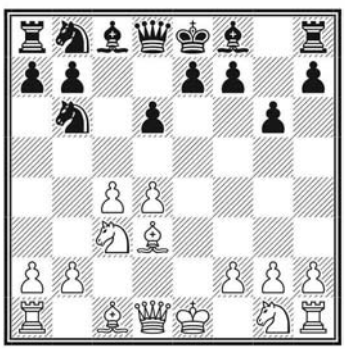


Greet and Carleton (England 2002) maintained equality after 12... dc 13.♗xc4 ♗g4 14.♗e2 ♘c6 15.a6 ba 16.♖xa6 ♘b4 17.♖a3 a5 18.h3 ♗f5 19.♘e5 ♖c8. Exchanging the light-squared bishops does not change our assessment: 12...♘c6 13.a6 dc 14.♗xc4 ba (J.-N. Riff – Chetverik, Metz 2013) 15.♗xa6 ♗xa6 16.♖xa6 ♘b4 17.♖a1 ♕d7 18.♗g5 ♘fd5, digging into the center.

The fianchetto with 6...g6 has justifiably rendered obsolete other, lesser quality continuations. White's countermeasures considered here do not amount to much. Moreover, in reply to 7.a4 Black achieves rich piece play via a number of means. Pawns will not win the game by themselves!

Chapter 52. 6.♘c3 g6 7.♗d3

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**e5xd6**	**c7xd6**
6.	**♘b1-c3**	**g7-g6**
7.	**♗f1-d3**	**...**



This move is chosen for the same reasons as when faced with 5...ed. White aims to prevent the enemy bishop from taking up its best squares.

7.	**...**	**♗f8-g7**
8.	**♘g1-e2**	**0-0**

8...♘c6 is played nearly as often, although Black has nothing to gain from delaying castling...

9.	**0-0**	**...**

...and it is the same for White.

9.	**...**	**♘b8-c6**

Let us also look at advancing in the center. After 9...d5 10.c5 ♘6d7 11.♗g5 h6 12.♗e3 ♘c6 13.♗b5 ♘f6 14.f3 ♗f5 15.♕d2 ♔h7 16.♘g3 ♗d7 17.♖ab1 ♘a5

18.b3 b6 19.♖fd1 ♗xb5 20.♘xb5 bc 21.dc Spraggett – Nataf, Enghien les Bains 1997, White's prospects on the queenside look better than Black's in the center. The Canadian Grandmaster is right not to chase after material: 13.♘xd5 ♘xc5 14.♘xe7+?! ♕xe7 15.dc ♖d8 (this is stronger than 15...♗xb2 16.♗xh6 ♖d8 17.♖b1 ♗e5 18.♗e3 ♗f5) 16.♕b1 ♘e5 17.♗e4 ♘c4.

9...e5 is a stronger move here. Black has good chances of equalizing after 10.de de 11.c5 ♘d5 12.♗c4 (12.♗e4!?) 12...♘xc3 13.♘xc3 ♘c6 14.♘e4 ♘d4 15.♗g5 ♕c7 16.♖c1 ♗e6 17.♗xe6 ♘xe6 Vasiesiu – Iankowski, Bucharest 2000. After 10.d5 a5 11.b3 f5 12.f4 ♘a6 13.fe de 14.Ba3 ♘b4 15.c5 ♘d7 16.♘a4 (Biti – Palkovi, Opatija 2003) 16...e4 17.♗c4 taking on a1 is extremely dangerous, but Black can deepen the intrigue with 17...♘xc5! 18.♘xc5 ♕b6 19.d6+ ♔h8 20.d7 ♕xc5+ 21.♔h1 ♗xd7 22.♕xd7 b5! 23.♗xb5 ♖ad8 24.♗xb4 ♕xb4 25.a3 ♕xb3 26.♖ab1 ♕a3 27.♕c7. The position remains unclear even now.

10. ♗c1-e3 ...

The practice of continuing 10.d5 seems to be going in the wrong direction. Black almost always pushes his knight to e5 and after 11.b3 either maneuvers unproductively (11...♗f5 and ♘b6-d7) or tries to break out without success – for example, 11...e6 12.de ♗xe6 13.♗e4 ♖b8 14.♗e3 ♘g4 15.♗d4 f5 16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.♘f4 ♗f7 18.♗d5 Lipka – Kantorik, Zvolen 2000. Maybe the knight should retreat in such a way that after e7-e6 it supports d6-d5? Zelcic versus Borgo (Formia 1995) did not face any problems after 10...♘b4! 11.b3 e6 12.de ♗xe6 13.♗e3 d5 14.♗c5 ♘xd3 15.♗xf8 ♕xf8 16.♕xd3 dc 17.♕f3 cb 18.ab. Moreover, 15...♘xf2! 16.♕xf2 ♕xf8 was probably even more precise.

10. ... ♘c6-b4

Black grabs the bishop pair hoping that this will bring him an advantage in the long-term, as for the next few moves it clearly will not bring any. In contrast with this main plan, let us consider exchanging the queen's bishop and setting up his pawns on light squares: 10...♗g4 11.h3 ♗xe2 12.♗xe2 e6 13.♖c1 d5 14.c5 ♘c8 15.♗b5 ♘8e7. Black here has a comfortable position in the spirit of the variations from the next chapter, and for this reason White more often plays 11.f3. In that case, the light-squared bishops are exchanged in a similar structure and White's spatial advantage is more tangible than Black's counterplay. For example, 11...♗f5 12.b3 ♗xd3 13.♕xd3 d5 14.c5 ♘c8 15.♖ab1 e6 16.b4 a6 17.♖fd1 ♘8e7 18.♘g3 f5 19.♘ce2 ♕d7 20.♕d2 ♔h8 21.♗h6 ♗xh6 22.♕xh6 Kamsky – Schulze, Mainz 2010, rapid.

10...e5 is seen in Game 55. After 10...d5 11.c5 ♘c4 12.♗xc4 dc 13.♕a4 ♘xd4 14.♗xd4 ♗xd4 15.

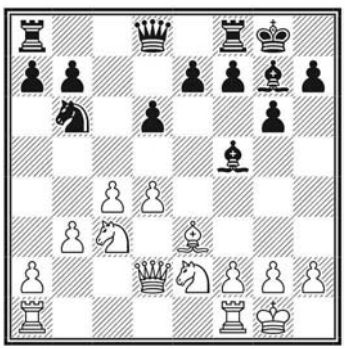
♖ad1 ♗d7 16.♕b4! ♗xc3 17.♘xc3 White wins the pawn back with an improved position. 11...♘d7 12.♗b5 ♘f6 is preferable; in that case, 13.h3 ensures that the bishop has an excellent outpost on f4.

11. b2-b3 ♘b4xd3

12. ♕d1xd3 ♗c8-f5

In reply to 12...e5 White can justifiably maintain tension in the center and choose the right moment to remove it. The continuation 13.♖ad1 ♗f5 14.♕d2 e4 15.♘g3 is highly dubious from the strategic point of view. Repositioning the knight via 12...♘d7 13.♕d2 ♘f6 is still insufficient for equality due to d4-d5.

13. ♕d3-d2 ...



It is still too early for Black to play actively. After 13...d5 14.c5 ♘c8 he will need to play e7-e6, but after 15.f3 this can lead to disaster for the light-squared bishop. If 13...e5 14.♖ad1 the bishop also turns into a burden for Black. All that remains is to wait, maneuver, and keep a close watch over White's activity in the hope of being able to break out eventually.

Game 55
R.Fischer – H.Berliner
New York 1960

The eleventh world champion played against the opening bearing the name of the fourth world champion only slightly more frequently than he played it as Black. His usual choice was the Exchange System with an identical piece setup no matter which pawn Black used for the capture on move 5.

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**e5xd6**	**c7xd6**
6.	**♘b1-c3**	**g7-g6**
7.	**♗f1-d3**	**♗f8-g7**
8.	**♘g1-e2**	**♘b8-c6**
9.	**♗c1-e3**	**0-0**
10.	**0-0**	**e7-e5**



In the Alekhine Defense (and in other openings), when White's knight

is on e2, Black should prioritize the pawn advancement that restricts this knight's mobility.

11. d4-d5 ...

Note that in the variation 11.de de 12.c5 ♘d5 13.♘xd5 ♕xd5 14.♘c3 ♕d8 15.♘b5 (to be followed unstoppably by ♘b5-d6) you can hardly say that the pawn has managed to cause the knight any problems. White is also slightly better after 12.b3 ♗e6 13.♗c5 ♖e8 14.♗e4 ♕h4 15.f3 ♖ad8 16.♕e1 Gardner – Shabalov, Toronto 1998, when Black should probably exchange queens and then defend accurately.

11. ... ♘c6-e7

Two years later the same opponents played against each other again in the national championship. His home preparation failed to help Berliner to gain equality: 11...♘b4 12.b3 ♘xd3 13.♕xd3 ♘d7 14.♕d2 f5 15.f4 (15.f3!?) 15...b6 16.♖ad1 ♘f5 17.fe de 18.♗g5 ♗d7 19.♔h1 ♗f7 20.♘g1 ♕f8 21.d6. The e5-f5 pawn pair looks imposing, but the passed d-pawn is more of a threat.

12. b2-b3 ...

More aggressive is 12.♕b3!? ♘d7?! 13.♕a3 ♘f6 14.♘b5 ♘e8 (De Dovitiis – Fusco, Villa Martelli 2010) 15.♘xa7 f5 16.♕b4, and Black has nothing for the pawn. Instead he should have played 12... ♗f5 13.♖ad1 ♗xd3 14.♖xd3 ♘f5, in order to exchange the dangerous bishop.

12. ... ♘b6-d7

In Al Sayed – Krylov (Moscow 2005) Black carried out the plan recommended in the previous comment: 12...♗f5 13.♖c1 ♗xd3 14.♕xd3 ♘f5 15.♗d2 ♘d7 16.♘e4 ♘c5 17.♕b1 b6 18.b4 ♘xe4 19.♕xe4 ♖c8 20.♗c3 ♘h6 21.h3 f5 22.♕d3 f4 23.f3 ♘f5 24.♗d2. Here, the best continuation is 24... ♕c7, preventing the ♘e2-c3-e4 maneuver. White in his turn should prefer to exchange on c5, despite the blockading knight.

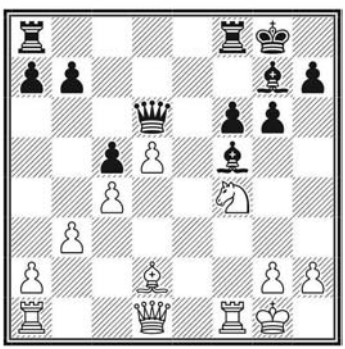
13. ♘c3-e4 ♘e7-f5
14. ♗e3-g5 f7-f6
15. ♗g5-d2 ♘d7-c5
16. ♘e4xc5 d6xc5
17. ♗d3xf5 ♗c8xf5

The potential blocker has been exchanged and there is no doubt about White's advantage. Fischer rejects any further manoeuvring and opens up the game.

18. f2-f4 e5xf4

Or 18...♕c7 19.♗c3 ♗h6 20.♘g3! ♗xf4 21.♘xf5 gf 22.♕f3 – White wins the pawn back with an excellent position.

19. ♘e2xf4 ♕d8-d6



20. ♘f4-h5!? ...

It is hard to imagine a situation here where Black's bishop pair would turn into a real advantage. Nevertheless, Fischer swaps the bishop, rejecting what looks like a good move in 20.♕f3!? after which he would have a choice of what to do with the knight, depending on the circumstances.

20. ... ♖a8-e8
21. ♘h5xg7 ♔g8xg7
22. ♗d2-f4 ♕d6-d7
23. ♕d1-d2 ♖f8-f7
24. ♗f4-h6+ ♔g7-g8
25. ♖a1-e1 ♖f7-e7
26. ♖e1xe7 ♕d7xe7
27. h2-h3 ♕e7-e4

27...♕e5 would have been more careful, in order to meet 28.♕f2 with 28...♗d3.

28. ♕d2-f2 ♕e4-e7
29. g2-g4 ...

If 29.♕g3 ♗e4 30.♗c1 (bringing the bishop to a longer diagonal) Black would have a tough position, whereas now he gets a chance to survive.

29. ... ♗f5-d3
30. ♖f1-d1 ♗d3-e4?!

Why not play 30...♕e2 and exchange the queens?! Berliner's mistakes suggest that he was in time trouble.

31. d5-d6 ♕e7-e5
32. ♗h6-f4 ♕e5-c3?

After 32...♕e6 33.♕xc5 ♗c6 the threats along the long diagonal would force White to either exchange queens on the e3-square, or else retreat his queen to f2. Either would have been better for Black than the continuation in the game.

33. d6-d7 ♖e8-d8
34. ♕f2-e2 ...

34.♗c7 ♕xh3 35.♕e2 is also winning, as the checks lead to nowhere.

34. ... ♕c3-f3
35. ♕e2xf3 ♗e4xf3
36. ♗f4-c7

1-0

The setup 7.♗d3 + 8.♘ge2 is not White's main weapon against 5...cd (unlike in case of 5...ed), but it is not without its threats. Black should consider the early e7-e5 pawn push without developing the knight on c6 (i.e. unlike Berliner).

Chapter 53. 6.♘c3 g6 7.♘f3 ♗g7 8.♗e2

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
5. e5xd6 c7xd6
6. ♘b1-c3 g7-g6
7. ♘g1-f3 ♗f8-g7
8. ♗f1-e2 ...



White continues to mobilize on the kingside, without wasting time with prophylactic play (for 8.h3, see Chapter 54). His play is based on the assumption that the bishop coming to g4 will fail to disrupt White.

8. ... 0-0

9. 0-0 ♘b8-c6

If 9...♗g4 10.♗e3 d5 11.c5 ♘c8? (after 11...♘c4 12.♗xc4 dc it is better for the black bishop to be on d3) 12.♕b3 White's double attack wins a pawn. 10...♘c6 11.b3 (or 10.b3 ♘c6 11.♗e3) leads to the main line, but there remains 10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♗xf3 ♘c6 12.c5 (12.♗xc6 bc 13.♕d3 d5 14.cd ♘xd5 is totally fine for Black) 12...dc 13.dc. In the variation 13...♘d7 14.♗e3 ♗xc3 15.bc ♕c7 16.♕b3 ♖ac8 17.♖fd1 ♘a5 18.♕b4 ♘xc5 (Delizia – D'Innocente, Verona 2005) the advantage of the bishop pair just about compensates for the missing pawn. The more complicated retreat 13...♘c4 is playable. For example, 14.♗d5 ♘4e5 15.♕a4 e6 16.♗e4 f5 17.♗xc6 ♘xc6 18.♘b5 ♕e7 19.♘d6 (Timofeev – Chetverik, Presov 2000) 19...♗e5 20.♖d1 f4 without counterplay, while after 15.♗e3 e6 16.♗xc6 ♕xd1 17.♖axd1 ♘xc6 18.♖d7 b6! the simplifications should lead to a draw.

10. ♗c1-e3 ...

White is simply not ready for the thematic advance in the center: 10.d5?! ♘a5 11.♘d2 ♗d7, and 12.♕c2 ♖c8 13.b3 is countered by 13...♘xd5!. If White spends time on 12.♘cb1 ♖c8 13.♘a3, then 13...e6 14.de ♗xe6 and d6-d5, and Black opens up the position advantageously.

10. ... ♗c8-g4

11. b2-b3 ...

It is also useful to take a look at the variation 11.c5 dc 12.dc ♗xf3 13.♗xf3 ♘c4. A fleeting glance might suggest White is better due to the bishop pair and pawn majority on the queenside. However, the weakness on b2 just about forces the exchange of bishops, and the position is actually a bit better for Black thanks to his better control of the center.

11. ... d6-d5

Black does not need to prepare the advance with 11...e6. After 12.h3 ♗xf3 13.♗xf3 d5 14.cd ♘xd5 15.♘xd5 ed 16.♖c1 ♘e7 17.♕d2 ♖e8 18.♗g5 Dervishi – Laketic, Padova 2006, the white bishops noticeably cramp the enemy. It is harder to assess 11...e5. If 12.d5 ♗xf3! 13.♗xf3 ♘d4 14.♗xd4?! ed

15.♘b5 a6 16.♘xd4? ♕h4 Aguiar – Baeta, Sindilegis 2009, then White loses the exchange. Alternatively, if White spares the knight then he has to put up with its presence. 12.de de 13.c5 ♘c8 14.h3 ♗f5 15.♘g5 ♘d4 (15...e4 16.♕e1!) 16.♗c4 h6 17.♘ge4 ♗e6 18.♗xe6 ♘xe6 19.♕e2 ♘d4 20.♕c4 Tiviakov – Hauchard, Torcy 1991, is more promising for White – here the knight does not cause him any real harm.

12. c4-c5 ...

Just so! If 12.cd ♘xd5 13.♘xd5 ♕xd5 14.♖c1 ♖ad8 15.h3 ♗e6 or 15...♗f5 (heading for e4) there is no compensation for the isolated pawn.

12. ... ♘b6-c8

12...♘d7 has been played by Zoltan Varga and Mihai Grunberg, but not even their authority can save the damaged reputation of this move. After 13.b4! White looks good whether Black plays 13... ♘xb4 14.♖b1 ♘c6 15.♘xd5 ♖b8 16.♘b4, or 13...♗xf3 14.♗xf3 e5 15.♘xd5 ed 16.♗f4 ♖c8 17.♕b3.

13. b3-b4 ...

Bagirov is clearly right in assessing 13.h3?! as losing a tempo. It would be wrong to think that strong players failed to anticipate how the game would develop from here – most likely, they provoked the exchange to defend the weak d4-pawn with the knight from the e2-square, now that it has become free. This deeply defensive structure promises White equality at best, and only with accurate play: 13...♗xf3 14.♗xf3 e6 15.b4 a6 16.♖b1 ♘8e7 17.♘e2 ♘f5 18.♕d2 ♘h4 19.♗g4 h5 20.♗g5 ♗f6 21.♗xh4 ♗xh4 22.♗f3 ♕f6 Sanchez – Dzhumaev, Rochefort 2009.

Exchanging the light-squared bishops allows Black to play actively on the queenside: 13.♘e1 ♗xe2 14.♘xe2 b6!? 15.♖c1 e6 16.♕d2 bc 17.♖xc5 ♕b6 18.♕c3 ♘b4 19.♘d3 ♘a6 20.♖c6 ♕b7 21.♕c2 ♘e7 22.♖c3 ♖fc8 23.♖c1 ♖xc3 24.♕xc3 ♖c8 25.♕d2 ♖xc1+ 26.♕xc1 ♕c6 27.♕d2 ♘f5 with equality, Huebner – Timman, Sarajevo 1991. Black should probably follow Timman's improvement: 18...♘8e7!? 19.♘d3 ♖fc8, ♘c6-d8 and, when the chance arises, ♘d8-b7.

13. ... a7-a6

Now, White should support b4-b5 with the help of ♖a1-b1 and only then a2-a4. Then, after the a-file opens, the rook will be unable to challenge its opposite number. If 13...e6 14.b5 ♘a5 15.♘d2 ♗xe2 16.♘xe2 a6 17.b6 the rook file remains closed and Black is clearly cramped.

14. ♖a1-b1 e7-e6

15. a2-a4 ♗g4xf3

Sometimes Black waits to exchange, without worrying about the knight possibly centralizing. After 15...♘8e7 16.b5 ab 17.ab ♘a5 18.♘e5 ♗xe2 19.♕xe2 ♘f5 20.f4?! (Oll – Wach, Manila 1992) 20...♗xe5! 21.fe ♘c4 22.♗f2 ♖a3

23.♘e4 de 24.♕xc4 e3 25.♗e1 ♕a8 White has no more aces to compete with Black's passed pawn and control of the only open file. Therefore, instead of being strengthened the knight should retreat.

16. ♗e2xf3 ♘c8-e7
17. b4-b5 a6xb5

Sometimes 17...♘a5 is played without taking the pawn – counting on taking with the rook and pressurizing a4 in the event of b5xa6. This approach proved justified in Narayanan – Nakamura, Gibraltar 2007: 18.♗g5 h6 19.♗xe7 ♕xe7 20.♕d3 ♖fd8 21.ba ♖xa6 22.♘b5 ♘c6 23.♘d6? ♖a7 24.♖b6 ♗xd4! 25.♖xc6 ♖xa4 26.♘b5 bc 27.♘xd4 ♖c8 28.g3 e5 29.♘b3 ♕f6 – the rook and two pawns are stronger here than the two minor pieces. The same assessment is applicable to the variations 26.♘c8 ♕d7 27.♕d1 ♖a1 28.♕xd4 ♖xf1+ 29.♔xf1 bc and 26.♘c8 ♕e8. ♘ote that after 26.♘c8 ♕e8 27.♕d1 bc!? 28.♕a4 ♗xc5 29.♖c1 ♗xf2+ 30.♔xf2 ♖xc8 Black has four pawns for the piece and has the better chances. Note also that actually White spent tempos on ♖a1-c1-b1, while Black spent them on ♗c8-f5-g4 (and, consequently, the move numbering is changed).

However, if 18.♗e2 then exchanging on a6 means capturing with the pawn. Black needs to maintain equality with 18...ab 19.♘xb5 b6.

18. a4xb5 ♘c6-a5
19. ♗f3-e2 ...

19.g4 prevents the knight from moving to f5, but even without that move Black lacks squares from which to invade. In the variations 19...♘c4 20.♗g5 ♖a3 21.♖b3 ♖xb3 22.♕xb3 ♗xd4 23.♖d1 ♘e5 24.♘xd5 ♘xf3+ 25.♕xf3 ♕xd5 26.♕xd5 ♗xf2+ 27.♔xf2 ♘xd5 28.♖a1 and 23...♗xc5 (Lamorelle – Chetverik, Cappelle-la-Grande 1997) 24.♗xd5! ♘e5 25.♗g2 ♕c7 26.♘e4 ♘xg4 27.♕g3 ♕xg3 28.hg ♗b4 29.♖d7 ♘d5 30.♖xb7 White just about has compensation for the pawn.

19. ... ♘e7-f5
20. ♕d1-d2 ...

20.♖b4 has also been played, in order to prevent the knight from getting to c4. After 20...♘xe3?! 21.fe ♕g5 22.♖f3 ♖fd8 23.♖a4 e5 24.e4! ed 25.♘xd5 ♘c6 (the knight's fate is also unenviable after 25...♗f8 26.♕c2 ♖dc8 27.♕a2) 26.♖xa8 ♖xa8 27.bc bc 28.♘b6 ♖a7 29.♘a4 ♕e5 30.♗d3, it required a miracle to save Yermolinsky in his game versus Ashley, Seattlle 2003. 20... ♕e7 21.♖a4 ♖fd8 was stronger – if the chance arises the knight will still move to c4.

20. ... h7-h6

Exchanging here with 20... ♘xe3 21.fe (typical in the Alekhine Defense) is, as in the majority of cases, to White's advantage. It is easier to defend the e3-pawn than the d4-pawn, and the chance to play

e3-e4 arises. For example: 21...♗h6 22.♖f3 ♕e7 23.♕e1 ♗g5 24.e4 ♕h4 25.g3 ♗g5 26.h4 ♗f6 27.♕f2 ♗g7 28.ed ed Yasseen – Wach, Manila 1992. After 28.♘xd5? ♕e4 White let the initiative slip away, which would have been rather meaty were he to rearrange his pieces with ♖f3-d3 and ♗e2-f3.

21. ♖f1-d1 ♖f8-e8

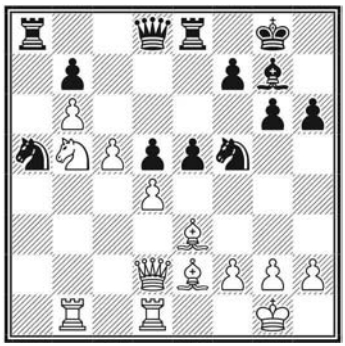
It would be useful for Black to advance with e6-e5, but only in such a way that the knight on a5 would not be left unsupported. The continuation 21...♕f6 22.♖b4 ♖fd8 23.♘a4 ♘xe3 24.fe e5?! 25.♘b6 ♖ab8?! 26.♖a4 Moroz – Sergeev, Decin 1998, was fatal for the knight; while 25...♖a7 26.de ♕xe5 27.♗f3 was not much better – White wins the central pawn.

22. b5-b6 e6-e5

23. ♘c3-b5 ...

Diagram

This highly tricky position arose in several correspondence games in the pre-computer era. Bagirov may well be right in assessing the continuation 23...♘xd4 24.♗xd4



ed 25.♘c7 ♘c4 26.♗xc4 dc as fairly promising for Black, but after 23...ed 24.♗f4 ♘c4 25.♕c2 ♘a3 26.♘xa3 ♖xa3 27.♗c7 the Grandmaster missed the intermediate move 27... ♖c3! (28.♕a4 ♕e7 29.♗b5 ♖f8 30.c6 bc 31.♗xc6 ♖c4 32.♕b5 ♖c5 leads to a draw by repetition).

If White wants to avoid an unattractive position with a long-lasting weakness on d4 then he should be persistent in advancing the b-pawn. But there is nothing new here. 8.♗e2 has failed to accord White any advantage, so the entire line has almost disappeared from play in the 21st century .

Chapter 54. 6.♘c3 g6 7.♘f3 ♗g7 8.h3

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**	**5.**	**e5xd6**	**c7xd6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**	**6.**	**♘b1-c3**	**g7-g6**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**	**7.**	**♘g1-f3**	**♗f8-g7**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**	**8.**	**h2-h3**	**...**



This is a useful prophylactic move, preventing the bishop from getting to its best square. The loss of a tempo is not significant, as the nature of the struggle is relatively quiet.

8. ... 0-0

8...♘c6?! is weaker due to 9.d5 ♘e5 10.♘xe5 ♗xe5 11.♗h6, impeding castling. B. Lengyel – Kahn (Budapest 1995) continued 11...♗d7 12.♕d2? (12.♖c1 with the better chances was correct) 12...♖c8 13.f4 ♗f6 14.♘e4 ♗h4+ 15.g3 ♗f5 16.♕d4 ♗xe4 17.gh e5! 18.de ♕xh4+ 19.♔d2 ♕xh6 20.ef+ ♔xf7 21.♕xe4 d5 22.cd?! ♖he8 23.♕d4, and 23...♖ed8 was the finishing touch in Black's powerful counterattack. Houdini's recommendation 11...♗xc3+ 12.bc ♕c7 is not convincing – the bishop pair will cause the enemy king no end of trouble.

9. ♗f1-e2 ...

After 9.♗e3 ♘c6 the continuation 10.♕d2 is analyzed in Game 7 of the historical section, while 10.♖c1 is seen in Game 56. 10.d5?! ♘a5 11.♗d4 ♗xd4 12.♕xd4 e5 13.de ♗xe6 14.♘e4 ♘c6 15.♕c3 f6 is better for Black – due to his advantage in development he can advance d6-d5. White's voluntary centralization of his queen in Sulskis – Chetverik (Cappelle-la-Grande 2008) condemned him to a tough endgame after 11...e5 12.de ♗xe6 13.♗xg7 ♔xg7 14.♕d4+ ♕f6 15.b3 d5 16.c5 ♘d7 17.♗e2 ♘c6 18.♕xf6+ ♔xf6 19.♘a4 ♖fe8 20.♔d2 d4! 21.♘e1 ♗d5 22.♗f3 ♗xf3 23.♘xf3 ♘de5 24.♘xe5 ♖xe5 25.♖he1 ♖ae8 26.♖xe5 ♖xe5. It would have been better to maintain equality with 14.b3 ♘c6 15.♖c1 ♕e7 16.♗e2 d5! 17.cd ♖ad8 18.♕d2 ♘xd5 19.0-0.

9. ... ♘b8-c6

It is too early to play 9...e5?! due to 10.♗g5 f6 11.♗e3 ♗e6 12.d5 ♗f7 (Rechel – Movsziszian, Germany 1995) 13.h4 with the possibility to switch to the queenside (c4-c5).

10. 0-0 ♗c8-f5

Black's plans normally include d6-d5, but he should not hurry with this move here. To see why, look at a fragment of Averbakh – Korchnoi, Moscow 1960: 10...d5 11.c5 ♘c4 12.b3 ♘4a5 13.♗e3 b6 14.cb ab 15.♖c1 ♗f5 16.♕d2 ♘b7 17.♘b5 ♖c8 18.♗f4 ♕d7 19.♖fd1. White's pieces are placed actively and defend d4 strongly, with the potential to convert his advantage on the queenside. Had Korchnoi waited for the bishop to develop on

e3, then his knight would not have been forced to run away.

As before, 10...e5?! fails to gain equality due to 11.♗g5 f6 12.♗e3 ♘e7 13.de de 14.♕b3 ♘d7 15.♖fd1, when it is hard for Black to complete his development. Or 13... ♘xe5 14.♘xe5 ♗xe5 15.♕d2 ♗e6 16.b3 ♕f6 17.♖ac1 f4 18.♗xb6 ab 19.♗f3 ♕h4 20.a4 ♖ad8 21.♖fe1 Brynell – Schultz, Berlin 1998 – Black has no attack whatsoever but numerous weaknesses.

11. ♗c1-e3 ...

The position of the bishop on f5 just about justifies the move 11.d5, which is normally quite risky in similar positions. After 11...♘a5 12.♘d4 ♘axc4 13.♘xf5 gf 14.a4 ♖c8 (14...♘a5!?) 15.a5 ♘d7 (Kuderinov – Polaczek, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010) 16.a6!? ba 17.♖xa6 ♘xb2 18.♗xb2 ♗xc3 19.♗xc3 ♖xc3 20.♕d2 ♖c7 21.♗d3 it is hard to see White losing (or winning, for that matter).

Together with 11.d5, Bagirov attached a question mark to the move 11.b3. Again, he was probably overdoing it a little. Admittedly, if 11...d5 12.c5 ♘d7 13.♘xd5?! ♘xc5 the long diagonal comes to the fore, but White should not lose if he is careful. Acceptable alternatives include 13.♗b2 ♗e4 14.♘a4 e5 15.de ♘dxe5 16.♘xe5 ♘xe5 17.♕d2 d4 18.♖ad1 ♘c6 Lehner – Onischuk, Guarapuava 1991, and 14...♗xf3 15.♗xf3 e6 16.♕d3 ♕b8 17.♖fd1 b5 18.cb ab 19.♗e2 ♖c8 Rozentalis – Appel, Germany 2006. But the continuation with the best reputation is 12.♗e3 (which is considered below via 11.♗e3 d5 12.b3).

11.♗f4 was favored by the young Karpov: in the first ten games in this line in the Megabase he headed the white army on seven occasions. The first of these games, Karpov – Vaganian (Leningrad 1969), continued 11...h6 12.♖c1 e5 (exploiting the fact that g5 is unavailable for the bishop) 13.♗e3 e4 14.♘d2 ♖e8 15.♘b3 d5 16.cd ♘b4. Bagirov claims that Black is better here, but 17.d6! (17...♕xd6 18.♘b5) refutes his assessment. 14... ♘xd4 15.♗xd4 ♗xd4 16.♘dxe4 ♗e5 17.f4 d5! 18.cd ♗xe4 19.fe ♗xd5 is interesting, with gradual equalizing. So it is worth spending time on the ♗f4+♖c1 setup! Note also that if 11.♗f4 h6 12.♗e3 (or 11.♗g5 h6 12.♗e3) the main lines with the addition of h7-h6 are definitely better for Black.

11. ... d6-d5

12. c4-c5 ...

12.g4 ♗c8 and only then 13.c5 is occasionally seen. After 13... ♘c4 14.♗c1 b6 15.b3 bc!? (as we shall see, this is almost a thematic sacrifice) 16.bc cd 17.cd dc 18.dc ♕xd1 19.♖xd1 c2 20.♖d4 ♖b8 21.♗d3 (Thakur – Gozzoli, Goa 2002) 21...♖b6 22.♗xc2 ♖xc6 23.♗b3 ♗xd4 24.♘xd4 ♖c3 25.♗e3 ♗d7 Black should draw. After the exchange of queens the

bishop was chased away, which was worse for Black. However, if 15...♘4a5! the white king might not survive. Another continuation, similar to the main line, has not been tested much. For example: 14.♗xc4 dc 15.d5 ♘b4 16.♗d4 f6 17.♖e1 ♖f7 18.♕a4 (Rodionov – Bratchenko, St. Petersburg 2003) 18...♘d3 19.♕xc4 ♘xe1 20.♖xe1 ♗d7 with an unclear position.

After 12.b3 dc 13.bc Black needs to force one of the pawns to move in order to fight the pawn pair. Konopka versus Slobodjan (Germany 1992) provoked the queen's pawn: 13...♗e6 14.d5 ♗xc3 15.♖c1 ♗f6 16.de fe 17.♕b3 ♕c7 18.♖fe1 ♖ad8 19.♗f1 with slightly better chances thanks to the bishop pair. In Kobalia – B.Savchenko (Aix les Bains 2011) it was the bishop's pawn that received the invite: 13...♘a5 14.c5 ♘bc4 15.♗f4 b6 16.♗xc4 ♘xc4 17.♕e2 bc! (an excellent alternative to the knight retreating to a5) 18.♕xc4 cd 19.♘e2 ♖c8 20.♕a6 d3 (20...♗e4!?) 21.♘g3 ♗xc4. Then, 22.♖xa1?! ♕b6! 23.♕a4?! ♗e6 24.♗e3 ♕b2 granted Black the initiative, whereas an intermediate exchange would have maintained approximate equality (22.♘xf5 gf 23.♖xa1 ♕d7).

12. ... ♘b6-c4

13. ♗e2xc4 ...

Caution! After 13.♗c1 b6 it would be a mistake to play 14.b3? due to 14...bc! 15.bc cd, and any capture on d5 eventually leads to material losses. Judging by the games Balogh – Chetverik (Gyongyos 1993), B.Vaulin – Chetverik (Pardubice 1996), Banov – Chetverik (Bulgaria 1996) and Havlicek – Chetverik (Pardubice 1999), there was a whole queue of players waiting to fall into the trap! But these variations are not particularly difficult to calculate: 16.♘xd5 d3! 17.♗xd3 ♗xd3 18.♕xd3 ♗xa1 19.♗g5 ♗g7 20.♖d1 ♖e8, or 16.cd dc 17.dc ♕xd1 18.♖xd1 c2 19.♗f4 cd♕+ 20.♖xd1 ♖ad8 and Black is the exchange up in both cases. Instead of 19.♗f4 White cannot play 19.♖d4? due to 19...♖ab8 20.♖c4 ♖b1 21.♔h2 ♖xa1 Kosmac – Raspor, Kranj 1999.

White should exchange on b6. Further 14...ab (or 14...♘xb6 15.♗f4 ♘c4 16.b3 ♘a3 17.♖c1 ♘b4, and the pawn majority is firmly blocked) 15.b3 ♘d6 16.♗e3 ♗e4 17.♖c1 ♕d7 18.a4 ♗xf3 19.♗xf3 e6 20.♕d2 ♖ac8 21.♖fd1 ♘a5 22.♖b1 ♖c6 23.♖dc1 ♖fc8 is possible, and Black has a more pleasant game, Vojtek – Chetverik, Marianske Lazne 2002.

13. ... d5xc4

14. ♕d1-a4 ...

After 14.d5? ♘b4 it is hard to find a satisfactory move for White. Losses are inevitable: 15.♕d2 (15.a3 ♘c2 16.♖c1 ♘xe3 17.fe ♗d3 18.♖f2 ♗xc3 19.♖xc3 ♕xd5) 15...♗d3 16.♖fd1 ♘xd5 17.♗h6 ♘xc3

18.bc ♕c7 19.♗xg7 ♔xg7 20.♕e3 ♖ac8 21.♘e5 ♗f5 22.♘xc4 ♕xc5 23.♕xc5 ♖xc5 24.♘e3 ♗e6 25.c4 ♖fc8 26.♖ab1 b6 27.♖b4 ♔f8 28.♖d4 ♖8c7 Ramik – Cambel, Tatranske Zruby 2012) – only Black's poor technique prevented him from converting his extra pawn.

14.♕d2?! would retain material equality but it is still a poor move. Jud – Chetverik (Bad Ragaz 2013) continued 14...♗d3 15.♖fd1 ♘xd4 16.♘e1 e5 (?!) 17.♘xd3 cd 18.♕xd3 ♖c8 19.♘e4 ♕d5 20.♗xd4 ed 21.b4 b6 22.♖dc1 bc 23.♖xc5 ♖xc5 24.♘xc5 a5 25.a3 ♖b8 26.♖b1, and a draw soon followed. Black let his advantage slip by taking the venom out of his own bishop. 16...♘c6 17.♘xd3 cd 18.♕xd3 ♕xd3 19.♖xd3 ♖ad8 would have been stronger, after which exchanging on c3 would break up his opponent's pawns.

14. ... ♗f5-d3

He should also consider 14...e5!? Very accurate play by both Maze and Gozzoli (Aix les Bains 2001) led to an even ending: 15.♖fd1 ed 16.♘xd4 ♘xd4 17.♗xd4 ♗xd4 18.♕xc4 ♗xf2+ 19.♔xf2 ♕f6 20.♔g1 ♖ad8 21.♘d5 ♕e5 22.♕d4 ♕xd4 23.♖xd4 ♔g7. If White tries to play aggressively then Black may seize the initiative: 15.d5 ♘d4 16.♘e1?! b5! 17.cb ♕xb6 or 16.♘d2 ♗d3 17.♖fc1 ♕c7 18.♘xc4 ♕xc5 19.♘a5 ♕c7 (although White has chances of his own in the latter case).

15. ♖f1-d1 ♕d8-a5

The bishop + c4-pawn construction is fragile, so exchanging the queens remains the most reliable continuation. Black should avoid the temptations in the center: 15... e5?! 16.d5 ♘d4 17.♘e1 b5 18.♘xb5 ♘xb5 19.♘xd3 cd 20.♕xb5 e4 21.♕xc4 f5 22.d6+ ♔h8 23.♗d4 ♗xd4 24.♕xd4+ ♕f6 25.♕d5 Zinchenko – Beletsky, Moscow 2007 – Black's defended passed pawn is harmless, while White's connected passed pawns storm forward. Or 16...♘e7 17.d6 ♘f5 18.♘e1 ♘xe3 19.fe b6 20.♘xd3 cd 21.♖xd3 bc 22.♖ad1 ♕b6 23.d7 ♖fd8 24.♘d5 ♕xb2 25.♘e7+ ♔h8 26.♘c6 Bjornsson – Thorsteins, Reykjavik 2012 – White's active play led to him winning the exchange, although he somehow managed to lose the game.

It is harder to assess the march of the neighboring pawn. Nuri and Bulanov (Fermo 2009) repeated an older game that White won after 15...f5 16.d5 f4? 17.♖xd3! cd 18.dc fe 19.cb ef+ 20.♔f1 ♖b8 21.♕c4+ ♔h8 22.c6 ♕b6 23.c7. An improvement for Black is 16... ♘e5 17.♘e1 f4 18.♗d4 f3 19.♗xe5 ♗xe5 20.♘xd3 cd 21.♖xd3 fg 22.♔xg2 ♖f4 23.♕b3 ♕f8 24.♖f1 ♗d4, and the white king is in danger, Blauert – Reinemer, Dresden 1993. White's chances in the 15...f5 line are definitely stronger, but Black also has aces up his sleeve.

The move 15...♕e8!? is played unjustifiably rarely. Peace was quickly restored in Berger – Chetverik, Kiel 2014: 16.♘e1 ♘xd4 17.♘xd4 ♗xd4 18.♘xd3 cd 19.♖xd3 ♘c2 20.♖ad1 ♘xe3 (the variation 20...b6!? 21.cb ♘xe3 22.b7 ♘xd1 23.ba♕ ♖xa8 24.♘xd1 is but a storm in a tea-cup) 21.♖xe3 ♔f8 22.♖d7 ♖ab8 23.♘b5 a6 24.♘c7 ♖ed8 (24...♖bd8?? 25.♖xe7!) 25.♖exe7 ♖xd7 26.♖xd7 ♗xb2 27.♘d5 ♗d4 28.♖c7 ♖e8 29.♔f1 ♖e6 30.♖xb7 ♗xc5 31.♖c7 ♗d4 32.♖c4 ♗e5, ½ - ½. Events were somewhat more exciting in Milman – Shabalov, Philadelphia 2004: 16.♕b5 e5 (16...♖b8 and only then e7-e5 is more solid) 17.d6 e4 18.♘e1 (18.♕xb7 ef 19.♕xc6 ♕xc6 20.dc ♖fb8 – Black should not lose here) 18...♘d4 19.♕xe8 (19.♕xb7 ♖b8 20.♕xa7 ♖xb2 with counter-chances) 19...♖fxe8 20.d6 ♖ad8 21.♖ac1 b6 22.♗d4 ♗xd4 23.c6 ♗xc3 24.d7 ♗xe1 25.de♕+ ♖xe8 26.♖xe1 ♖c8. Black's slight advantage eventually turned into a full point.

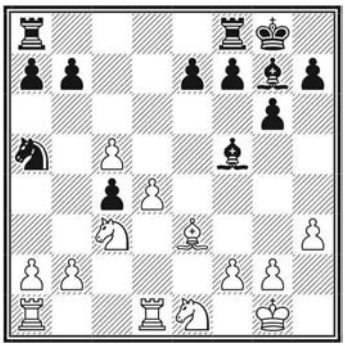
16. ♕a4xa5 ♘c6xa5

17. ♘f3-e1 ...

After 17.♗g5 e6 18.♘e5 ♘c6 19.♘xd3 cd 20.♖xd3 ♗xd4 21.♖ad1 f6 22.♗e3 ♗xe3 23.♖xe3 e5 24.♖d7 ♖f7 25.♖d6 Neverov – Nosenko, Alushta 2003, White has a small advantage thanks to his domination along the open file. Since 18...♗xe5 19.de b6 immediately leads to equal chances, White prefers to attack the bishop from his back rank.

17. ... ♗d3-f5

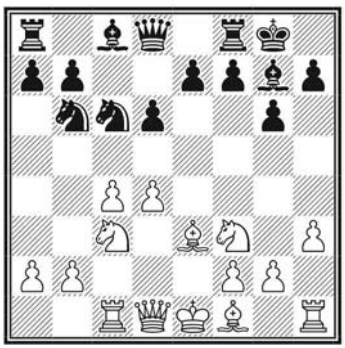
The continuation 17...e5 18.de ♗xe5 19.♘xd3 cd 20.♖xd3 ♘c4 21.♖d7 (Shurakov – Prizant, Serpukhov 1992) 21...♗xc3 22.bc ♘xe3 23.fe ♖ac8 24.♖b7 a6 practically guarantees a draw, although from the psychological point of view playing Black here is unpleasant.



Bagirov demonstrated that chances are equal in this position on the basis of a large number of games played. However, the entire line has gone out of fashion. Only one more game is noteworthy, the correspondence game Kampfhenkel – Honfi, 1992: 18.d5 ♗xc3!? 19.bc ♖fd8 20.♖d2 e6 21.d6 ♖d7 22.f3 ♖c8 23.g4 ♗d3 24.♘xd3 (24.♖b2) 24...cd 25.♖xd3 ♘c4 26.♗d4 ♘xb2 27.♖d2 ♘a4 28.♖b1 ♘xc5. The knight has demonstrated great agility, although Black was unable to hold on to the extra pawn. He did however win after a long ending.

Game 56
M.Nezar – C.Bauer
Nancy 2005

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**e5xd6**	**c7xd6**
6.	**♘b1-c3**	**g7-g6**
7.	**♘g1-f3**	**♗f8-g7**
8.	**h2-h3**	**0-0**
9.	**♗c1-e3**	**♘b8-c6**
10.	**♖a1-c1**	**...**



Compared with 10.♗e2 this move enjoys certain advantages and is therefore played fairly often.

10. ... d6-d5

If 10...♗f5 11.d5 ♘b4 the rook protects c2 and White achieves his aim of centralizing his knight. Therefore, the continuation 11... ♘e5 12.♘xe5 ♗xe5 is the subject of debate. After 13.♗e2 ♖c8 14.b3 e6 15.de ♗xe6 16.♘b5 d5 17.c5 ♘d7 18.0-0 a6 19.♘d4 ♘b8 20.♗h6 ♖e8 21.f4 ♗f6 22.f5 ♗d7 Kanovsky – Velicka, Czech Republic 2012, the position is quite unclear, while adding the moves ♗e3-h6 and ♖f8-e8 seems unnecessary. If White is not careful Black may launch strong counterplay on the queenside; 14...♗g7 15.♗g4 ♗d7 16.♗f3 ♘a8 17.h4?! (17.♗d4 would have prevented Black's next move) 17...b5! 18.h5?! (18.♗e2 was correct) 18...bc 19.b4 ♘b6 20.♘e4 ♗a4 21.♕d2 c3 22.♕d3 ♘c4 with a clear advantage, Lanc – Vyskocil, Brno 2012. Without the unprepared march of White's rook's pawn his chances would have been somewhat better.

What does the position of the rook on c1 give White after 10...e5 ? If tension is maintained in the center then, for example, it could lead to the short draw seen in Zagrebelny – Koniushkov, Kstovo 1997: 11.♗e2 ed 12.♘xd4 d5 13.cd ♘xd5 14.♘xd5 ♘xd4 15.♗xd4 ♕xd5 16.♗xg7 ♕xd1+ 17.♖xd1 ♔xg7 18.0-0 ♗e6 19.♗f3 ♖ac8 20.♖d2. The king's bishop did not stop at this modest outpost in Nozdrachev – Kovalenko (Izhevsk 2011) after 11.d5 ♘e7 12.c5 dc 13.♗xc5 ♖e8 14.♗b5 ♗d7 15.d6 ♘c6 16.0-0 a6 17.♗d3 ♗e6 18.♗e4 ♘d7 19.♗e3 h6 20.♗d5. Black is now in trouble; rather than blocking the passed pawn he should have attacked it – 15...♘f5!? 16.0-0 e4 17.♘d4 ♗xd4 18.♗xd4 ♖e6. The position after 13.d6 ♘f5 14.♗xc5 ♗e6 is considered by Valery Chekhov to be unclear (while White has a

guaranteed draw by repetition after 15.d7 ♘e7 16.♕d6 ♘f5 17.♕d3 ♘e7 18.♕d6).

If 11.de de 12.c5 ♘d7 13.♗c4 the bishop once again finds a useful role. Practice has proved that White is better here, in particular after 13...♕a5 14.a3 e4 15.♘d2 ♘c5 16.b4 ♕xa3 17.♗xc5 (17.♘b5?? ♘d3+!) 17... ♗xc3 18.♗xf8 ♔xf8 (Zagrebelny – Remizov, St. Petersburg 1994) 19.0-0 ♕b4 20.♘e4 ♗b2 21.♖c2. But once again, Black's advantage in development enables him to improve his play: 11...♘xe5!? 12.♘xe5 ♗xe5 13.♗e2 ♗e6 14.b3 d5 15.cd ♗xc3+ 16.♖xc3 ♘xd5 17.♖xd3 ♘xe3 18.♖xd8?! (Serper – Yermolinsky, Tilburg 1994) 18... ♘xg2+! 19.♔f1 ♖fxd8 20.♕c1 ♘h4 with clear compensation for the queen.

11. c4-c5 ...

After 11.b3 e5! 12.de dc 13.♗xc4 ♘xc4 14.bc ♘xe5 15.♘xe5 ♗xe5 White moves his knight to d5 but he fails to gain any advantage – Black has a pair of active bishops and a better pawn structure.

11. ... ♘b6-c4

12. ♗f1xc4 d5xc4

13. 0-0 ...

So, thanks to taking on c4 in one scoop, White has gained an extra tempo, i.e. ♖a1-c1. Well, is it unnecessary?

13. ... ♗c8-f5

If 13...e5 14.d5 ♘b4 15.d6 ♘d3 16.♖b1 the tempo is won back, but Black's position is unenviable. The variation 13...b6 14.cb ab (reminding his opponent that he has left a pawn to its own devices) 15.♕e2 ♗a6 16.a3 ♘a5 17.♖cd1 is probably also good for White.

14. ♕d1-a4 ...

The simplifications after 14.b3 ♗d3 15.♖e1 ♘xd4 16.♘xd4 ♗xd4 17.bc ♗xe3 18.♖xe3 ♗xc4 19.♕xd8 ♖fxd8 20.♖xe7 should lead to a draw. But given that in practice other results have also been recorded we must add here 'providing that both players are careful'.

14. ... ♗f5-d3

15. ♖f1-d1 e7-e5

If 15...♘xd4 16.♘xd4 ♗xd4 17.♖xd3 cd 18.♗xd4 the rook and (rather flimsy) pawn make insufficient compensation for White's two minor pieces. In the variation 15...f5 16.d5 f4 17.♖xd3 cd 18.dc fe 19,♕c4+ e6 20.c6 White's passed pawns are far more dangerous than Black's (which are also hanging by a thread). Finally, after 15...♕a5 16.♕xa5 ♘xa5 17.d5 ♗f5 18.♗d4 ♖ac8 19.♗xg7 ♔xg7 20.g4 ♗d7 21.♘e5 ♖fd8 22.♘e4 White has centralized menacingly.

16. d4xe5 ...

The more complicated continuation 16.d5 has not been analyzed sufficiently to be accorded an exhaustive verdict. 16...♘d4 17.♘e1 b5 18.♕a3 e4 19.♘xd3 (19.c6!?) 19...ed 20.♗xd4 ♗xd4 21.♘xb5 is possible (Stojanovic – Boric, Bosnia 2006) 21...♗xf2+!

22.♔xf2 ♖e8 23.♔g1 ♖e2 24.♘c3 ♖xg2+! 25.♔xg2 ♕g5+ and a draw by perpetual check.

16. ... ♘c6xe5

17. ♘f3-e1 ...

According to the Megabase, after 17.♘xe5 ♗xe5 18.b3 ♕h4?? 19.♖xd3 Grandmaster Movsziszian resigned against Joecks, Hamburg 1993. Instead of blundering the piece he should have played 18... ♗xc3 19.♖xc3 ♕f6 20.♖cc1 ♖fd8 21.bc ♗e4, pinning his hopes on opposite-colored bishops. But definitely not 21...♖ad8? 22.♗h6 ♗e2 23.♖d6! ♖xd6 24.cd ♖d8 25.♖e1 b5 26.♕a3 ♗c4 27.♕e3, and Serper accepted Dreev's resignation (Sverdlovsk 1987).

17. ... ♖f8-e8

By retreating his knight White intended to break his opponent's structure in the center (with the help of b2-b3 or f2-f4), and now it would be useful for Black to withdraw his queen from its standoff against the enemy rook. After 17...♕e8!? 18.♕xe8 ♖fxe8 19.♘b5 ♖e7 20.b3 Saltaev – V.Ivanov, Ashkhabad 1996, Black should seek a draw: 20...cb! 21.♘xd3 ♘xd3 22.♖xd3 ♗b2! 23.♖dd1 ♗b2! 24.♖a1 ♖d7! 25.♖xd7 ♗xa1 26.♘d4 ♗c3 27.♘c2 ♖b8! 28.♗d4 ♗xd4 29.♖xd4 b5!.

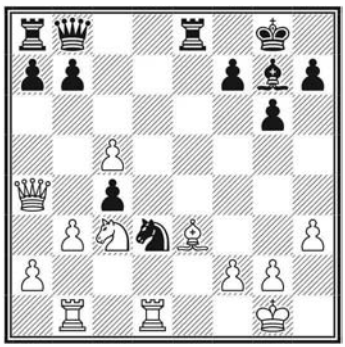
18. b2-b3 ♕d8-b8

Black is late exiting the file, as can be demonstrated by 19.♘b5! ♗e4 20.bc ♗c6 21.♕b3 b6 22.cb ab 23.♗d4 with an extra pawn and fine position. Grabbing a pawn undertaken by Mustafa Nezad is decisively refuted.

19. ♘e1xd3? ♘e5xd3

20. ♖c1-b1?! ...

At this point it would have been better to take on c4 and say goodbye to the exchange...



20. ... ♖e8xe3!

21. f2xe3 ♕b8-e5

22. ♖d1xd3 c4xd3

23. ♘c3-e4? ...

White abandons resistance. 23.♘d1 does not look nice but at the very least it would have halted the passed pawn.

23. ... ♖a8-e8

24. ♘e4-d6 ♕e5xe3+

25. ♔g1-h1 ...

Nothing changes after 25.♔h2 ♕e5+ 26.♔g1 ♕xc5+ (26... ♕e1+?! 27.♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 28.♔f2 d2 29.♕b4!) 27.♔h1 ♖e2.

25. ... ♕e3-e1+!

26. ♖b1xe1 ♖e8xe1+

27. ♔h1-h2 d3-d2

0-1

At this point we can close our

investigation of the Exchange System with 5...cd in its classical interpretation. The line with h2-h3 demands careful play from Black and certain knowledge, but is objectively insufficient for White to gain a lasting advantage. This conclusion is not at all new, and the Alekhine Defense's iconoclasts have built a new battering ram. A serious test of its armor is to be found in the next chapter.

Part 11 The Exchange System with 5...cd. The Voronezh Variation

Introduction

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**e5xd6**	**c7xd6**
6.	**♘b1-c3**	**g7-g6**
7.	**♗c1-e3**	**♗f8-g7**
8.	**♖a1-c1**	**...**

It would have been perfectly consistent to play 8.♕d2 in order to set up a battery on the c1-h6 diagonal. Then, a good continuation would have been 8...0-0 9.♗h6 e5 10.♗xg7 ♔xg7 11.de (the pawn setup on the light squares after 11.d5 would be a strategic concession) 11...de 12.0-0-0 ♕xd2+ 13.♖xd2 ♘c6 14.c5?! ♘d7 15.♘a4 ♘d7 16.♗c4 b5! (Maahs – Pajeken, Hamburg 2007). Black has the advantage; in particular, if 17.cb ♗b7! 18.f3 ♖fc8 19.b3 ab Black is already attacking his underdeveloped opponent.

8.	**...**	**0-0**

Now any developing move gives Black something to grab hold of. For example, 9.♗d3 ♘c6 10.♘ge2 d5 11.c5 ♘c4 12.♗xc4 dc 13.0-0 ♗f5 14.♕a4 ♗d3 15.♖fd1 e6 16.♘f4 ♘xd4 17.♘xd3 cd 18.♕c4 ♕h4!? 19.♕xd3?! (he should have made do with exchanging queens and equality – 19.♔h1 ♘f3(f5) 20.♕xh4 ♘xh4) 19...♖fd8 20.♕f1 (Remete – Chetverik, Zalakaros 2004), and the unexpected manoeuvre 20...♘f5! 21.♗d2 ♕b4! put White in a difficult position. The line played can also be reached after 9.♗e2 d5 10.c5 ♘c4 11.♗xc4 dc 12.♘ge2 ♘c6 13.0-0, while after 10.b3 dc 11.bc ♘c6 12.♘f3 ♗g4 13.d5?! ♘a5 14.♘d2 ♗xe2 15.♕xe2 ♖c8 16.♗xb6 ♕xb6 17.0-0 ♕b2 (Kozakov – Kantorik, Slovakia 1998) the queen's expedition to b2 went unpunished.

After 9.♘f3 ♗g4 10.♗e2 ♘c6 for some reason 11.b3?! is the preferred move. Then, 11... d5 12.c5 ♘c8 leads to the main line from Chapter 48 with the unnecessary timewasting move ♖a1-c1. At the same time 11.d5!? is a useful capture of territory here:

11...♗xf3 12.♗xf3 ♘e5 13.b3 ♘xf3+ 14.♕xf3 ♘d7 15.0-0 a6 16.♕e2 ♖e8 17.♖fd1 ♕a5 18.♗d4 ♘f6 19.b4 ♕c7 20.c5 (Bellia – Chetverik, Bugibba 2012); moreover, 18...♗xd4 19.♖xd4 b5 promises counterplay. It seems that Black should not rush with developing the bishop and should prefer 9...♘c6 10.d5 ♘e5 11.♘xe5 ♗xe5 12.♗e2 e6 13.♕d2 ed 14.cd ♗f5 with fully equal play.

9. b2-b3! ...



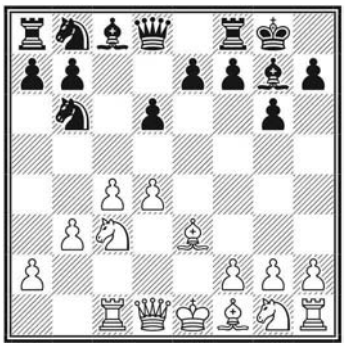
A very interesting position! It looks as though White has forgotten about his kingside, instead patiently strengthening the pawn pair c4-d4. At the same time, potential targets of Black's fearsome dark-squared bishop have moved away from the long diagonal. Black enjoys a large choice of continuations, but White can find good ways to cope with any setup of his opponent.

According to the Megabase, the first ever game in this line was Rubinetti – Schmid (Mar del Plata 1970). It went unnoticed, and the Argentinian master never repeated his experience. In the 1980s, the Voronezh-based chess player Sergei Kislov successfully played this line, and his fellow townsmen took up his productive idea. The name 'the Voronezh Variation' has taken root in opening theory and the success enjoyed by White has transformed this sly setup into his main weapon against 5...cd.

In Chapter 55 we review various second-rate responses by Black. The analysis of 9...♘c6 is given in Chapter 56, while 9...e5 can be found in Chapter 57.

Chapter 55. Various Black replies

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**e5xd6**	**c7xd6**
6.	**♘b1-c3**	**g7-g6**
7.	**♗c1-e3**	**♗f8-g7**
8.	**♖a1-c1**	**0-0**
9.	**b2-b3**	**...**



9. ... f7-f5

This looks suspicious from the positional point of view. Nevertheless, even grandmasters have given in to the temptation to harass White's nicely developed piece, given that White hasn't bothered to mobilize his kingside.

A number of second-rate continuations have been seen in commented games: 9...a5 in Game 57, 9...♘6d7 in Game 58, and 9...♗f5 in Game 59. 9...♖e8, with the idea of after 10.♗e2 e5 dissuading White from developing the bishop on c4 at the loss of a tempo, is hardly ever seen. It's symptomatic that this was played (versus Almagro, Spain 2009) by the venerable theoretician Grandmaster Marin. The game continued 10.♘f3 (10.h4!?) 10...♗g4 11.♗e2 d5 12.h3 (12.c5 ♘c8 leads to a position from Chapter 48 with the addition of the modest b2-b3 and the not entirely useless ♖f8-e8) 12...♗xf3 13.♗xf3 e6 14.0-0 ♘c6 15.cd ed 16.♕d3 a6 17.♘a4 ♘xa4 18.ba with approximate equality.

The modest move 9...e6 played by Vladimir Sergeev (in a game with Kozakov, Ukraine 2001) involves the smart idea of exchanging the queen's bishop for the knight 'from the other side' – as a result of the manoeuvre ♗c8-d7-c6. After 10.♘f3 ♗d7 11.♗e2 ♗c6 12.0-0 ♗xf3 13.♗xf3 d5 14.cd ed 15.a4 ♘c6 16.♕d2 White's achievements are quite modest, but a stronger continuation is 15.♘a4! ♘xa4 16.ba (Chernyshov), in order to put strong pressure on d5 via ♖c1-c5.

In the game Kulaots – Chetverik (Cappelle-la-Grande 2006), White, instead of castling, threw his rook's pawn into battle: 12.h4!? ♗xf3 (if 12...h6?! 13.♕d2 ♔h7 14.h5 g5 White has a choice of piece sacrifices to make) 13.♗xf3 d5 14.cd ed 15.h5 ♘c6 16.hg fg 17.♘e2 ♕f6 18.♕d2 ♖ae8 19.0-0 ♕d6 20.♖c5, and now follows a pretty (although, alas, incomplete) combination 20...♖xf3! 21.gf ♘xd4! 22.♗xd4 ♖xe2! 23.♕xe2 ♗xd4 24.♖cc1 ♕g3+ which led to a draw. The play of the Estonian Grandmaster can be improved with 19.a4!? ♕d6 20.♖c5 ♖f5 21.0-0. Maybe it would have been better to send the h-pawn on its mission earlier: 10.h4!? f5 11.g3 (11.♕d2!?) 11...♘8d7 12.h5 g5 13.h6 ♗f6 14.♘f3 ♕e7 (Lintchevski – Pesotsky, Pardubice 2012) 15.♕d2 g4 16.♘g1 e5 17.♘ge2 and White has a clear advantage in piece setup.

10. d4-d5 ...

White accepts the challenge,

although the continuations 10.♕d2, 10.g3 and 10.♘h3 all successfully counter f5-f4. Then, after 10...e5 11.de de advancing the f-pawn would be harmful to Black, as the bishop would move to c4 with check. Black should probably move his knight from b6 via d7 to f6.

On the other hand, in reply to 10.f4 he should advance the central pawn. After 10...e5! 11.de de 12.♕xd8 ♖xd8 13.fe (13.c5?! ef 14.♗xf4 ♗xc3+ 15.♖xc3 ♘d5 16.♗c4 ♗e6) 13... ♘c6 14.♘f3 ♘xe5 15.♘xe5 ♗xe5 16.g3 (Yandemirov – Terentjev, Izhevsk 2009) 16...♖d3 17.♘d1 ♖e8 18.♔f2 ♗c8 Black has no problems.

If 10.♘f3 f4 here, then compared with the main line the bishop cannot centralize and is forced to retreat. Note that a risky kingside storm by Black in the game Stripunsky – Shabalov (Philadelphia 2012) led to disaster after 11.♗d2 ♘c6 12.d5 ♘d4 13.♘xd4 ♗xd4 14.♗e2 e6 15.de ♗xe6 16.0-0 ♕h4? 17.♗f3 g5 18.♘b5 ♗e5 19.♘c7 g4 20.♘xe6 gf 21.♕xf3 ♖f7 22.c5 ♘d7 23.cd. He should have strengthened in the center more reliably while gradually achieving equality: 12... ♘e5 13.♗e2 ♘bd7 14.0-0 ♘xf3+ 15.♗xf3 ♘e5 16.♘e4 ♗f5 17.♗c3 ♖c8 18.♘g5 ♕b6 19.♘e6 ♘xf3+ 20.♕xf3 ♗xe6 21.♗xg7 ♔xg7 22.de ♖c5 (Pilgaard – Kopylov, Gelsenkirchen 2000).

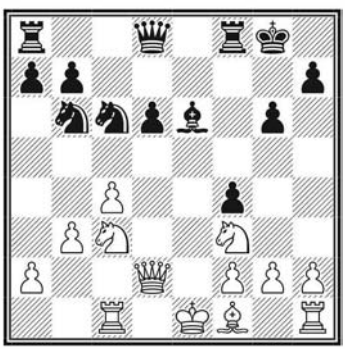
10. ... f5-f4

Black sometimes plays e7-e5 here, not rushing to drive the bishop away. In the game Zhao Zong Yuan – Gluzman (Gold Coast 2001) Black conceded the light squares to his opponent and found himself in hot water: 10...e5 11.de ♘c6 12.♘h3 ♗xe6 13.♗e2 h6?! 14.♘f4 ♗f7 15.♘fd5 ♘xd5 16.♘xd5 g5 17.0-0 f4 18.♗d2 ♘e5 19.♗c3 ♗e6 20. ♗xe5 ♗xe5 21.♗g4 ♗f7 22.♖e1. He should have got rid of his weak pawn with the help of a thrust in the center: 13...d5 14.♘xd5 ♘xd5 15.cd ♕xd5 16.♕xd5 ♗xd5 17.0-0 ♖fd8 – chances were practically equal.

11. ♗e3-d4 e7-e5
12. d5xe6 ♗g7xd4
13. ♕d1xd4 ♗c8xe6
14. ♘g1-f3 ...

14.♖d1 ♘c6 15.♕xd6? ♕f6 leaves White even more lagging in development. For example, 16.♕d2 ♖ad8 17.♕b2 ♘b4 18.♗e2 ♘xa2! winning back the pawn with benefits, or 16.♘e4 ♕f5 17.f3 ♖ad8 18.♕c5 ♖xd1+ 19.♔xd1 ♕f7 with chances to attack the centralized king.

14. ... ♘b8-c6
15. ♕d4-d2 ...



As always, the route to prosperity in such situations is via d6-d5. Black simply has to select the optimal way to execute this plan. If 15...d5 16.cd ♘xd5 17.♗c4 ♘c7 18.♕e2 ♕e7 19.0-0 ♗xc4 20.♕xc4+ ♕f7 21.♘e4 ♕xc4 22.♖xc4 White retains his advantage into the endgame. Therefore, Black should bring his queen's rook into play: 15...♕e7 16.♗e2 d5 17.cd ♖ad8 18.0-0 ♘xd5 19.♘xd5 (19.♖fe1 ♘db4 20.♕b2 ♕f6) 19...♗xd5 20.♕b2 ♕f6 21.♕xf6 ♖xf6 22.♖fd1 ♔g7, and here the activity of Black's pieces compensates for the defects in his pawn structure (Soraas – Hammer, Tromso 2007).

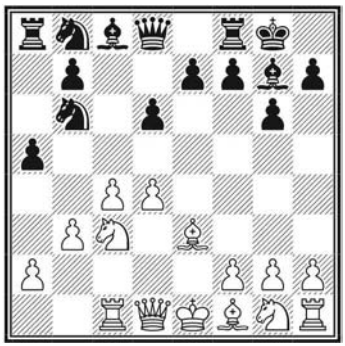
Game 57

P.Leko – V.Ivanchuk

Odessa 2007, rapid

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**e5xd6**	**c7xd6**
6.	**♘b1-c3**	**g7-g6**
7.	**♗c1-e3**	**♗f8-g7**
8.	**♖a1-c1**	**0-0**
9.	**b2-b3**	**a7-a5**

Exploiting White's b-pawn as a target to aim at Black intends to activate his queen's rook. This is no more than a local success, which does not involve the other black pieces (including the problem knight on b6).



10. ♗f1-e2 ...

This is the most precise choice. If White attempts to block the pawn then he will weaken b4, and Black will most probably achieve a comfortable structure. For example, 10.a4 ♘a6!? 11.♘f3 ♗g4 12.♗e2 e6 13.0-0 ♘b4 14.h3 ♗xf3 15.♗xf3 d5 16.c5 (16.♘b5!?) 16...♘c8 17.♗e2 h6 18.♘b5 ♘e7 19.♗d3 ♔h7 20.♗f4 ♘bc6 21.♗b1 ♘f5 22.♗xf5 gf 23.♗d6 ♖g8 with counterplay along the g-file (K.Szabo – Chetverik, Veszprem 2003). A similar picture emerges after 10.♘f3 ♗g4 11.♗e2 d5 12.c5 ♘c8 13.0-0 ♘c6. Compared with the variations from Chapter 48 White's queenside pawn attack has become much more complicated, although the dent at b5 may come in useful.

10. ... ♘b8-a6

Ivanchuk postpones the pawn's further march until his queenside pieces are developed. This is partially because in response to 10... a4 White has the good continuation

11.b4 ♘c6 12.a3 – the pawn will probably come to regret its agility. 11.♘f3 ♗g4 12.0-0 a3 13.♘e1 is also good for White, where his knights on c2 and b1 come down hard on the intruder. Or 12...ab 13.ab ♘c6 14.h3 ♗xf3 15.♗xf3 ♘d7 (Kiik – Maki Uuro, Jyvaskyla 1997) 16.♖e1 ♕a5 17.♘b5 – having defended d4, White is ready to dispute the open file.

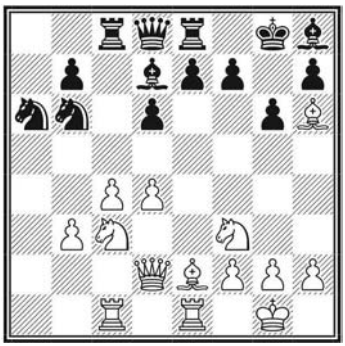
11. ♘g1-f3 ♗c8-d7

Time works against Black in the 9...a5 line. The variation 11...a4 12.0-0 ab 13.ab ♘b4 14.♕d2 ♗g4 15.h3 ♗xf3 16.♗xf3 d5 17.♘a4 illustrates this well. Black has opened up the a-file, found a good square for his queen's knight and exchanged the light-squared bishop while executing d6-d5. But – he didn't have time to play e7-e6, and his position collapses like sandcastles.

12. 0-0 ♖a8-c8

It appears that Ivanchuk decided to provide his opponent total freedom of action, counting on him making mistakes. On the other hand, 'thematic' play would not guarantee Black an easy life: 12...e6 13.♕d2 ♘c8 14.♗h6 ♘e7 15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.♕f4 ♗c6 17.♖fd1 d5 18.a3 ♘c7 19.c5 b6 20.b4 ab 21.ab b5 22.♖a1 (Finkel – Nataf, Cannes 1996).

13. ♕d1-d2 a5-a4
14. ♖f1-e1 a4xb3
15. a2xb3 ♖f8-e8
16. ♗e3-h6 ♗g7-h8



17. h2-h4 ...

Having blocked Black's h-pawn Leko advances his own, and in so doing provokes his opponent into making a mistake.

17. ... e7-e5?

A counter-strike in the center in response to a flank attack. But here it's not wise; he should have developed his bishop to f5 or g4.

18. d4xe5 d6xe5
19. ♗h6-g5 ...

It's not easy to work out which move Ivanchuk missed. After all, apart from the move played 19.♘e4 would have won the exchange.

19. ... f7-f6
20. ♗g5-e3 ♘a6-c5
21. ♗e3xc5 ♖c8xc5
22. b3-b4 ...

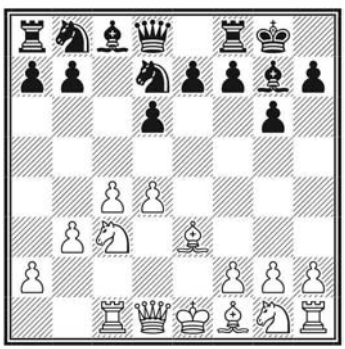
Now if 22...♘xc4 White wins with 23.♗xc4 ♖xc4 24.♕a2, while if 22...♖c8 White has 23.c5 ♘a8 24.♘e4.

22. ... ♖c5xc4
23. ♗e2xc4 ♘b6xc4
24. ♕d2-d5 ♗d7-e6
25. ♕d5xb7 ♕d8-b8

26. ♕b7-c6 ♗e6-f7
27. ♘c3-d5 ♘c4-d6
28. ♘d5-c7 ♖e8-d8
1-0

Game 58
D.Pavasovic – M.Chetverik
Lienz 2007

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
5. e5xd6 c7xd6
6. ♘b1-c3 g7-g6
7. ♗c1-e3 ♗f8-g7
8. ♖a1-c1 0-0
9. b2-b3 ♘b6-d7



The authorship of this idea probably belongs to Dovzik. Black redeploys his worst piece to its optimal square, counting on the loss of tempo turning to his advantage in this static position.

10. ♗f1-e2 ...

In reply to 10.d5 the knight would be right to change its itinerary: 10...♘a6 11.♘f3 ♘dc5, and then ♕d8-a5 with a blockade of the queenside. Another good continuation for Black is 10...♘f6 11.♗e2 ♗f5 12.♘f3 ♘e4 (12.g4!? would prevent the reduction in tension) 13.♘xe4 ♗xe4 14.♘g5 ♗f5 15.g4 ♗d7 16.♕d2 f6 17.♘e4 f5 18.gf ♗xf5 19.♘g3 ♗h3 20.♖g1 ♘d7 with the 'bad' knight in an improved position and good prospects.

In the game Guentner – Chetverik (Bad Ems 2008) Black equalized chances after 10.♕d2 ♖e8 11.♘f3 ♘f6 12.h3 (12.♗e2 ♘g4! 13.♗g5 h6 14.♗h4 ♘f6) 12...♗f5 13.♗e2 ♘e4 14.♘xe4 ♗xe4 15.0-0 e5 16.♖fe1 ♘c6 (not tempted by the suicidal 16...♗xf3?! 17.♗xf3 e4? 18.♗g5 f6 19.♖xe4 fg 20.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 21.♗xb7 ♘d7 22.♖e1 with a win) 17.de de 18.♘g5 ♕xd2 19.♗xd2 ♗f5 20.♗f3 (20.g4 ♖ad8! 21.♗e3 ♗c8) 20...h6 21.♗xc6 bc 22.♘e4 ♗xe4 23.♖xe4 ♖ad8.

10. ... ♘d7-f6
11. h2-h3 d6-d5
12. ♘g1-f3 ♘b8-c6
13. 0-0 ♗c8-f5

Having analyzed the previous games, Zoltan Varga became convinced that the bishop on f5 was precarious and preferred to fianchetto it immediately. After 13...b6 14.♘e5 ♗b7 15.♗f3 ♘xe5?! (15...e6 is the lesser evil here) 16.de ♘d7 17.e6! fe 18.♗g4 ♘c5 19.♗xc5 bc 20.♗xe6+ ♔h8 21.♗xd5 ♕a5 22.♗xb7 ♖ab8 23.♘e4 ♖xb7

24.♕d5 only a miracle managed to save Black (Bures – Z.Varga, Heviz 2012).

14. g2-g4!? ...

A great find by the Slovenian Grandmaster. 14.♘e5 dc 15.♘xc6 bc 16.bc ♘e4 17.♘xe4 ♗xe4 18.♗d3 ♗xd3 19.♕xd3 ♕d6 20.♖fd1 ♖fd8 21.♕b3 e6 is completely harmless (Prasca Sosa – Kveinys, Calvia 2004). The more complicated continuation 14.c5 ♘e4 15.♘a4 h5 16.a3 e5 17.de ♘xe5 18.♘d4 ♕f6 19.♖e1 ♖ad8 20.f3 ♘g3 (A.Kiselev – Chetverik, Sochi 2007) also fails to grant White any advantage. Instead of 21.♕d2 White continued 21.♗f2? ♘xe2+ 22.♖xe2 ♘d3 23.♘xf5 ♕xf5 24.♖cc2 ♘xf2 25.♔xf2 d4, and Black gained the upper hand. Finally, in a more recent game Delchev – Iliev (Bulgaria 2014) after 14.♖e1 ♖c8 15.g4 ♗e6 16.♘g5 ♗d7 17.c5 h6 18.♘f3 h5 19.♘e5 hg 20.hg equality was maintained by Black's exchange operations: 20...♘e4!? 21.♘xd5 ♘xe5 22.de e6 23.♘f6+ ♗xf6 24.ef ♗xf6.

14. ... ♗f5-e6

15. ♘f3-g5 ...

The variation with 15.♘e5!? dc 16.bc ♘xe5 17.de ♘d7 18.f4 doesn't give Black any advantage. However, Black should be able to defend the at first glance dangerous position after 15...♕c8 16.f4 ♖d8 – White's unemployed bishops are the reason for this.

15. ... ♗e6-c8

Avoiding the obvious trap: 15...♘e8?! 16.♘xe6 fe 17.cd ed 18.♘xd5!

16. f2-f4 h7-h6

After the bishop retreats White's knight has no business on g5, so there was no need for Black to push it back to a better square. In the game Bracker – Chetverik (Olomouc 2009) Black preferred 16...b6 17.♘f3 ♗b7 18.♘e5 e6 19.♗f3 ♘e7 20.b4 ♘e4 21.c5 bc 22.dc ♘xc3 23.♖xc3 ♗a6 24.♗e2?, and this mistake in an unclear position could have proved costly after 24...d4!

17. ♘g5-f3 ♗c8xg4?!

This tempting bishop sac isn't actually correct. If 17...dc 18.d5 ♘b8 19.bc White has a large advantage in development but his pawn structure and exposed king are to Black's advantage.

18. h3xg4 ♘f6xg4

19. ♘c3xd5 ...

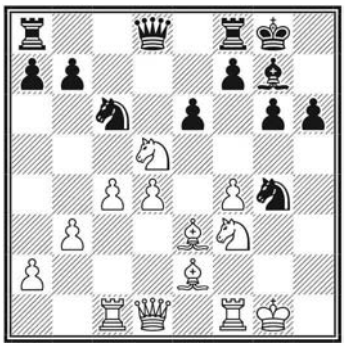
19.♕d2 was stronger. Pavasovic failed to notice that the sharp combination 19...dc 20.d5 ♕a5?! 21.dc ♖ad8 comes unstuck due to White's intermediate move 22.b4! ♕xb4 23.♘d5.

19. ... e7-e6

Diagram

20. ♘f3-e5!? ♘g4xe5?

The Grandmaster's bait was swallowed. Black hurries to win back the piece, failing to take



into account that his kingside pawn majority pales into insignificance compared with White's central pawns. Meanwhile, 20...♘xe3 21.♘xe3 ♘xd4 would have guaranteed certain compensation for the material.

21. d4xe5 e6xd5
22. c4xd5 ♘c6-e7
23. d5-d6 ♘e7-f5
24. ♗e3-f2 ♖f8-e8

In the variation 24...f6 25.e6! ♕xd6 26.♕xd6 ♘xd6 27.♗c5 White uses the pin to win the exchange.

25. ♗e2-g4 ♗g7-e5
26. d6-d7 ♖e8-e7
27. ♗g4xf5 g6xf5
28. ♗f2-h4 f7-f6
29. ♕d1-d5+ ♔g8-h7
30. f4xe5 ♖e7xd7
31. ♕d5-f3 ♕d8-b6+
32. ♔g1-h1 ♖d7-g7
33. ♕f3-f5+ ♖g7-g6
34. ♗h4-f6 ♖a8-g8
35. ♕f5-d7+
1-0

Game 59
S.Dvoirys – O.Steffens
Oberwart 2004

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
5. e5xd6 c7xd6
6. ♘b1-c3 g7-g6
7. ♗c1-e3 ♗f8-g7
8. ♖a1-c1 0-0
9. b2-b3 ♗c8-f5



This useful developing move has recently started to attract the attention of practitioners. Black's reply and White's following move will then shape the nature of the subsequent struggle.

10. d4-d5 ...

It's not worth spending time on 10.♘f3, as it takes us to an over-analyzed structure similar to that from Chapter 48. For example, 10...♗g4 11.♗e2 e6 12.0-0 d5 13.c5 ♘c8 14.b4 ♗xf3 15.♗xf3 e6 16.a4 ♘c6 17.b5 ♘a5 18.♖e1 h6 19.♗f4 ♘e7 20.♗e5 ♗xe5 21.♖xe5

♘f5 with a comfortable position (Andrews – Nakamura, Las Vegas 2007). In the game Sergienko – Taddei (Pardubice 2011) Black's bishop never made it to g4, but managed to get exchanged for the knight from a different square: 10...d5 11.c5 ♘c8 12.h3 ♘c6 13.♗e2 ♗e4 14.0-0 ♗xf3 15.♗xf3 e6 16.b4 a6 17.♘e2 ♘8e7 18.g4 ♕d7 19.a3 f5 20.♗g2 Black feels great in this closed position and the continuation 20...e5 21.de fg 22.hg ♕xg4 was certainly not forced.

10.♗e2!? is more potent. At the very least, after 10...d5!? Black has to give up a pawn: 11.c5 ♘c8 12.♗f3 ♘c6 13.♗xd5 e5!? 14.♗xc6 bc 15.de ♕a5!? 16.b4 ♕xb4 17.♕d4 a5 18.♘f3 ♘e7 19.0-0 ♖fd8 20.♕f4 ♖d3 (Chlost – Chetverik, Olomouc 2010). White's position is becoming alarming, as he has missed the chance to consolidate (either with 16.f4 ♘e7 17.♘f3 ♖ad8 18.♗d2 ♕xc5 19.♕e2 or 19.♘e4 ♕a3 20.♘d6). 10...♘c6 leads to 9...♘c6 (Chapter 56) via a different move order. It's also worth looking at 10...e5, as after 11.de de 12.♕xd8 ♖xd8 13.c5 in the modified tabiya (with the addition of ♗f1-e2 and ♗c8-f5) the manoeuvre ♘b6-c8-e7 can be played. 13...♘d7 14.♘b5 ♘c6 15.♘d6 ♖ab8 16.♗c4 ♗e6 17.♗xe6 fe (Richterova – Chetverik, Trebic 2014) is probably also fine, as the doubled pawns will support the centralized knights.

10. ... e7-e5

After 10...♘a6 11.♘f3 ♗g4 12.♗e2 ♗xf3 13.♗xf3 ♘c5 14.b4 ♘cd7 15.♕b3 ♖c8 16.♗e2 ♘f6 17.0-0 (Yagupov – Petit, Ubeda 1996) Black blundered in a somewhat worse position with 17...♕d7? 18.♘b5 ♖a8 19.♘xa7! White could also have played the more precise 11.h3 and ♘g1-f3 after that.

11. g2-g4!? ...

In his typically aggressive style, the Grandmaster from Chelyabinsk goes straight for the attack. There is nothing to be gained from 11.de ♗xe6 (11...fe!?) 12.♘f3 ♘c6 13.♘b5 (13.♗e2 d5! 14.cd?! ♗xc3+ 15.♖xc3 ♘xd5 16.♖c1 ♘xe3 17.fe ♕b6 is better for Black) 13...d5 14.c5 ♘d7 15.♗e2 (Perelshteyn – Mulyar, New York 1998) 15...♘f6 16.0-0 ♘e4.

11. ... ♗f5-c8

12. h2-h4 f7-f5

This measure is necessary to avoid ending up extremely cramped with a strategically unpromising position (12...♕e7 13.h5 ♘8d7 14.h6 ♗h8 15.♘e4).

13. h4-h5 ...

13.gf ♗xf5 14.h5 is certainly no worse than this.

13. ... f5-f4

14. ♗e3xb6 ...

Maybe Dvoirys missed Black's 16th move?! Retreating the bishop to d2 would have been a sensible alternative to exchanging here.

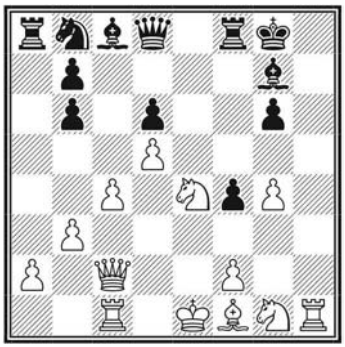
14. ... a7xb6

15. h5xg6 h7xg6

16. ♕d1-c2 e5-e4!

The same move would be played in response to 16.♗d3!?, although after 16...e4!? 17.♘xe4 ♖xa2 18.f3 ♕e7 19.♔f1 Houdini prefers White.

17. ♘c3xe4 ...



17. ... ♗c8xg4?!

In such a complex position the human chess player was unable to foresee that counterplay on the a and e files here is more important than the g4 pawn. The variation with 17...♘a6! 18.a4 ♕e7 19.f3 ♖e8 (threatening 20...♗xg4!) 20.♗h3 ♘c5 is not hard to calculate. Which you would not say of the line 18.f3 ♗xg4!! 19.fg ♘b4 20.♕h2 ♖e8 21.♗g2 ♖xa2 22.♘e2 ♘d3+ 23.♔f1 f3! 24.♗xf3 ♖xe4! 25.♗xe4 ♕f6+ 26.♗f5 ♘xc1 27.♕h7+ ♔f8 28.♘f4 gf (28...♘xb3 29.♘xg6+ ♔f7 30.♘h8+ and White manages to draw by perpetual check) 29.♘e6+ ♔f7 30.g5 ♖f2+! 31.♔g1 ♖g2+! and here it is Black who opts for perpetual check.

18. ♗f1-h3 ♗g4xh3
19. ♖h1xh3 ♘b8-a6
20. a2-a4 ♕d8-e7
21. ♔e1-f1 ♘a6-b4
22. ♕c2-e2 ♖a8-e8
23. ♖c1-e1 ♕e7-d7
24. ♕e3-d2 ...

24.f3 is the optimal square for the knight, but this would have opened a path for the queen on the kingside. After 24...♘a6 25.♕g2 ♕f5 26.♖d1 and then ♕g2-f2-h4 White successfully regroups and increases his advantage.

24. ... ♘b4-a6
25. ♘e4-g5 ♖e8xe1+
26. ♕d2xe1 ♘a6-c7?

This was too passive. After 26... ♘c5 27.♘1f3 ♖f5 Black still has many weaknesses but they are defendable.

27. ♕e1-e4 ♖f8-f5
28. ♘g1-f3 ♗g7-e5?
29. ♘f3xe5 d6xe5
30. ♕e4-h1! ...

Steffens clearly failed to anticipate the queen's elegant retreat, otherwise he would have admitted his error by swinging his knight over to c5 via a6.

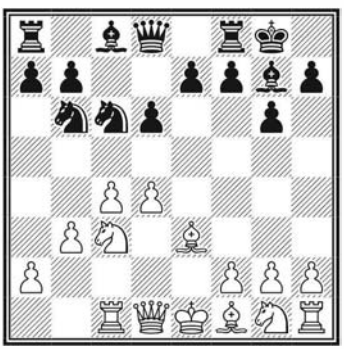
30. ... ♕d7-g7
31. ♖h3-h7 ♖f5-g5
32. ♖g5xg7+ ♔g8xg7
33. ♕h1-h4 ♔g7-f6
34. ♕h4-h8+ ♔f6-f5
35. f2-f3 ♖g5-h5
36. ♕h8-c8 ♔f5-g5
37. ♕c8-d8+ ♔g5-h6
38. ♕d8-h8+
1-0

As in many lines of the Alekhine Defense, Black's prospects in the variations we have just considered

depend on making a successful career of the unfortunate knight on b6. Because of this 9...♘6d7 looks somewhat preferable to 9...f5 (after which the knight's manoeuvre also deserves a lot of attention), whereas after 9...e6 or 9...a5 Black has problems.

Chapter 56. 9...♘c6

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**e5xd6**	**c7xd6**
6.	**♘b1-c3**	**g7-g6**
7.	**♗c1-e3**	**♗f8-g7**
8.	**♖a1-c1**	**0-0**
9.	**b2-b3**	**♘b8-c6**



This appears the natural and most popular move, but in fact it is only natural at first glance. Each Alekhine devotee knows that playing d4-d5 in this type of structure is fundamentally better for White, and Black needs to take concrete action to neutralize White's stable advantage.

10. d4-d5 ...

He should accept the challenge. The short game Chernyshov – Z.Varga (Balatonbereny 1993) ended in a draw after 10.♘f3 e5!? 11.de de 12.♕xd8 ♖xd8 13.c5 ♘d5 14.♘xd5 ♖xd5 15.♗c4 ♖d7 16.♘g5 ♘d4 (16...♖e7 17.0-0 ♗f5 is also fine) 17.0-0 b5 18.cb ab 19.♗xd4 ed 20.♘xf7 ♗a6 21.♗e6 (the opposite-colored bishops after 21...♖xf7 22.♖c7 ♔h8 23.♖xf7 ♗xf1 24.♔xf1 ♖xa2 make further battle pointless). In response to 10.♗e2 we recommend that Black make a typical and somewhat pretty pawn sacrifice: 10...d5!? 11.c5 ♘d7 12.♘xd5 ♘db8! 13.♗c4 e6 14.♘c3 ♘xd4 15.♘ge2 e5 (or 15...♘xe2 16.♕xe2 ♕a5 17.♕b2 ♘c6) 16.0-0 ♘bc6 17.♘b5 (Maros – V.Sergeev, Slovakia 1997) 17...♘xb5 18.♕xd8 ♖xd8 19.♗xb5 ♗f5 with equality.

10. ... ♘c6-e5

Other retreats don't leave Black with any plans other than e7-e5 and, after en passant, playing d6-d5. Then, White normally gains a pawn majority on the queenside, blocking the black pawns in the center. For example, 10...♘b8 11.♗e2 e5 12.de ♗xe6 13.♘f3 d5

14.c5 ♘c8 15.0-0 ♘c6 16.♘b5 ♘8e7 17.♘bd4 ♘f5 18.♘xf5 ♗xf5 19.♘d4 ♗e4 20.♕d2 ♖e8 21.♗b5 ♕h4 22.g3 ♕f6 23.♗xc6 bc 24.f3 ♗f5 25.♗f2 (Berezjuk – Z.Varga, Litomysl 1995) or 10...♘b4 11.a3 ♘a6 12.♗e2 e5 13.de fe (13...♗xe6 14.♘b5 ♘c8 15.♗f3 ♖b8 16.♘e2) 14.♘f3 d5 15.c5 ♘d7 16.b4 ♘c7 17.0-0 ♘f6 18.h3 ♘h5 19.♗g5 ♕e8 20.♕d2 ♕f7 21.b5 ♗d7 22.a4 (Wolter – Skulener, Germany 2003). Overall, White's advantage is fairly modest.

11. ♗f1-e2 ...

It's too early to play 11.f4 ♘g4 12.♗d4 due to 12...♗xd4 13.♕xd4 e5 14.de ♖e8! 15.♘f3 ♗xe6 16.♗e2 ♗f5 17.0-0 ♘e3 18.♖f2 ♘g4. No sooner has White completed his development than the black knight forces him to repeat moves.

11. ... f7-f5

This move supports a number of plans. The launch of a pawn storm (albeit unlikely), control over the e4 and g4 squares, and freeing up f7 for the retreating knight. But the question of whether all of this is worth significantly weakening Black's position needs to be investigated.

Several other continuations have been played here. 11...e6?! met strong resistance in the game Altounian – Khachiyan (USA 2003): 12.f4 ♘ed7 13.de ♕e7 14.♘f3 (14.ed?! ♕xe3 15.♕d2 ♕xd2+ 16.♔xd2 ♗xd7 17.♗f3 ♗c6 is totally fine for Black) 14...♘c5 15.f5! gf 16.ef+ ♖xf7 17.♗g5 ♕e8 18.♘b5 ♘e4 19.♘xd6 ♘xd6 20.♕xd6 ♘d7 21.♖c2 ♘f6 22.0-0 – White has spirited his king away and remains a solid pawn ahead.

So this demonstrates that e7-e6 first needs to be properly prepared. In response to 11...♖e8 a good continuation is 12.♘f3 e6 13.de ♗xe6 14.0-0, after which Black can only open up the position with d6-d5 at the cost of a dubious pawn sacrifice. A more frequent continuation though is 12.f4 ♘ed7 13.♘f3. Here after 13...e6 14.de ♖xe6 15.♗d4 ♘f6 16.0-0 a tempo is lost in moving the rook back, while after 13...♘f6 14.0-0 e6 15.de ♗xe6 16.♗d4 d5 17.c5 ♘bd7 18.♗b5 Black is cramped.

If 11...♗f5 12.f4 ♘ed7 White should avoid the exciting temptation of hunting the isolated bishop. The complications after 13.g4 ♗xc3+ 14.♖xc3 ♗e4 15.♘f3 ♘f6 16.♕d4 ♗xd5! 17.cd ♘bxd5 18.♖c2 ♘xe3 19.♕xe3 ♘xg4 end up giving Black three pawns for the piece. In the game Gavrilov – Chetverik (St. Petersburg 2012) White's strictly positional play enabled him to retain the opening advantage: 13.♘f3 ♘c5 14.0-0 ♘bd7 15.♘d4 ♘f6 (15...♘e4 16.♘xe4 ♗xe4 17.♕d2 and then ♗e2-f3) 16.♘xf5 gf 17.♕c2 ♕d7 18.♗f3 ♖fc8 19.b4 ♘a6 20.♕b3.

Advancing with 11...a5 allows the 'bad' knight to reinforce its position on c5, but that is really

too slow: 12.f4 ♘ed7 13.♘f3 ♘f6 14.♘d4 ♘bd7 15.0-0 ♘c5 16.f5 ♗d7 17.♕e1 ♕c8 (Sanal – Zarkua, Porto Carras 2011) 18.fg hg 19.♕h4 and the black king is in trouble.

Finally, it is worth considering 11...h5 (which, unlike 11...f5 disputes the important g4 square while avoiding shutting out the bishop). If 12.h3 e6 advancing with 13.f4 provides Black with counterplay: 13...♕h4+ 14.♔f1 ♘g4!? 15.♗xg4 ♗xg4 16.♕xg4 ♕h8! 17.♘b5 ed 18.♕e2 dc 19.bc ♗d7 20.♘xd6 ♗c6 and Black has a powerful bishop pair. After 13.de ♗xe6 14.♘f3 d5 15.cd ♘xd5 16.♘xd5 ♕a5+ 17.♕d2 ♕xd2+ 18.♔xd2 ♗xd5 19.♘xe5 ♗xe5 20.♗f3 ♗xf3 21.gf f5 (Averjanov – Gubajdullin, St. Petersburg 2003) the simplifications led to an equal ending. To fight for an advantage White probably needs to play 13.♘f3 or 13.♕d2.

The best response to 11...h5 is 12.♘f3. The continuation 12... ♗g4?! 13.♘xe5 ♗xe2 14.♘xf7! ♗xd1 15.♘xd8 ♗xb3 16.ab ♖fd8 17.♘b5 ♖dc8 18.0-0 ♗f6 19.g3 ♔f7 20.h4 ♖g8 21.♘xa7 left Black a pawn down (Kupreichik – Krivonogov, Nizhny Novgorod 1998). After 12...♘xf3+ 13.♗xf3 ♘d7 14.0-0 ♘e5 15.♗e2 ♘g4 16.♗xg4 ♗xg4 17.♕d2 ♖e8 18.♗d4 b6 19.♗xg7 ♔xg7 20.♕d4+ ♔g8 21.♖fe1 (Trent – Damia, Milan 2008) White plans pressure on e7 without meeting the slightest resistance.

12. f2-f4 ...

This reduces the mobility of both armies. Another good idea is to place f4 under observation: 12.♘h3 (12.♕d2!?) 12...♘bd7 13.0-0 ♘f6 14.f4 ♘f7 (it would have been better to bring the knight to c5 via d7) 15.♘f2 h5 16.h3 a6 17.♘a4 e5 18.de ♗xe6 19.♗f3 ♖b8 20.♗a7 ♖a8 21.♗b6 ♕d7 22.♗d4 ♖ae8 23.♕d2, and the black pieces are falling over each other (Fedorowicz – Shabalov, Tulsa 2008). Vydeslaver versus Porat (Israel 2010) failed to hold onto the pawn and helped Black to establish his knight in the center: 12.♘f3 f4 13.♗d4 ♘xf3+ 14.♗xf3 ♘d7 15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.♕d4+ ♘e5 17.♗e4 b6 18.f3 ♕c7 19.0-0 ♕c5 20.♖cd1 ♗d7 21.♖fe1 a6 22.♕xc5 bc 23.♗c2 a5. At this point White probably needs to play a2-a4 and adopt a defensive stance.

12. ... ♘f6-g4

In the game Getz – Azizi (Stockholm 2010) Black kept his knight out of battle and organized a blockade of the queenside: 12...♘f7 13.♘f3 ♘d7 14.♘d4 ♕a5 15.♕d2 ♘c5 16.0-0 ♗d7 17.♗f3 ♘h6 18.h3. Instead of 18...♕b4 play continued 18...a6? 19.♖b1 breaking through the blockade (19...♕b4 20.a3! ♕xa3 21.♘c2). Opening up the center only worsens Black's problems: 13...e5 14.de ♗xe6 15.0-0 ♖e8 16.♕d2 d5 17.c5 ♘d7 18.♗b5 ♖e7?! 19.c6 ♘b8 20.cb ♖xb7 21.♘d4 ♗d7 (Della Morte – Shcherbine, Argentina 2006), and

the bishop's retreat to e2 effectively ended the battle.

13. ♗e2xg4 ...

This changes the pawn structure. The arguments from the previous commentary (regarding 12...♘f7) are applicable to the move 13.♗d4. If 13...♗h6 14.♕d2 ♘d7 15.♘f3 ♘c5 16.0-0 a6 17.♖ce1 ♗d7 18.♗d1 ♖e8 19.♗c2 ♖c8 20.h3 ♘f6 21.♘g5 ♗g7 22.♕f2 (Cobo Garrido – Mirzoev, Zaragoza 2011) Black has no counterplay and has to sit and wait for White to attack. After the center is opened with 13... e5 14.de ♗xe6 15.♘f3 ♖e8 16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.0-0 ♗g8 18.♕d4+ ♕f6 (Giaccio – Galindo, Almeria 2007), even exchanging queens doesn't help Black to improve his position.

13. ... f5xg4

14. ♘g1-e2 e7-e5

Unhurried manoeuvring would leave Black passively defending his weak pawns. As can be seen from the example Edouard – Gesos (Greece 2011), such defense is frequently hopeless: 14...♘d7 15.0-0 ♘f6 16.♘d4 ♗f5 17.♘xf5 gf 18.♕d3 ♕d7 19.♘b5 a6 20.♘d4 ♘e4 21.♘e6 ♖f7 22.♗b6 ♖c8 23.♖ce1 ♘c5 24.♗xc5 dc 25.♘xg7 ♔xg7 26.♖e6 ♖f6 27.♖fe1 ♖xe6 28.♖xe6.

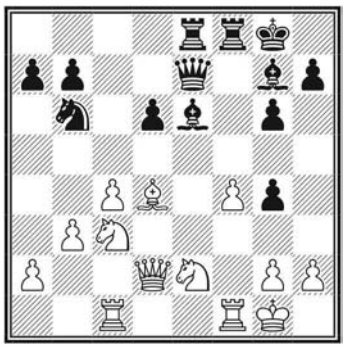
15. d5xe6 ♗c8xe6

16. 0-0 ♕d8-e7

16...d5 17.c5 ♘c8 18.♗d4, as usual, is a further strategic concession. But whether it's worth putting up with the pawn on d6 is a big question.

17. ♕d1-d2 ♖a8-e8

18. ♗e3-d4 ...



Now, in response to 18...d5, apart from 19.c5 White also has 19.♗xg7 ♔xg7 20.cd ♘xd5 21.♘xd5 ♗xd5 22.♕xd5 ♕xe2 23.♖c7+ ♖e7 24.♖xe7+ ♕xe7 25.♕d4+ winning the pawn on a7. After 18... ♗d7 19.♗xg7 ♔xg7 20.♖cd1 ♗c6 ♘ataf versus Hjartarson (Reykjavik 2004) could comfortably capture the pawn on d6 without any risk of indigestion. Even big Alekhine Defense expert Zoltan Varga lost without putting up a fight against Duda (Budapest 2013) after 18... ♗h6 19.♖ce1 ♕d8 20.♘g3 d5. Here, the continuation 21.♗c5 (instead of 21.c5) would also have won a pawn (in this case d5).

The knight's development on c6 has firmly strengthened the reputation of the Voronezh Variation. Even if Black now finds the most stubborn continuation, he will end up with an unattractive position with no chances to win.

Chapter 57. 9...e5

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**e5xd6**	**c7xd6**
6.	**♘b1-c3**	**g7-g6**
7.	**♗c1-e3**	**♗f8-g7**
8.	**♖a1-c1**	**0-0**
9.	**b2-b3**	**e7-e5**



This is the move that deserves the most attention, rather than the pointless knight sortie on c6. Black slows his development somewhat, but counts on a pawn majority on the kingside.

10. d4xe5 ...

10.♘f3 ♘c6 11.de de 12.♕xd8 ♖xd8 13.c5 ♘d7 leads to the main line, although Black also has the opportunity to centralize his knight. After 13...♘d5!? we have the position from Chernyshov – Z.Varga (Balatonbereny 1993) examined in Chapter 56 under the 9...♘c6 10.♘f3 e5!? move order.

The pin 10...♗g4 is no more than a mirage in this position: 11.de de 12.♕xd8 ♖xd8 13.♘g5 h6 14.h3 ♗c8 15.c5 ♘6d7 16.♘ge4 f5 17.♘d5 ♘c6 18.♘d6 ♘f8 19.♘c7 ♖b8 20.♗c4+ ♔h7 21.f3 (Novichkov – Chekhov, Serpukhov 2002). Black is already cramped, and the combination 16.♘xf7! ♔xf7 17.♗c4+ ♔f8 18.♘d5 would have done him even more harm. In the variation 10...♕e7!? 11.♗e2 e4 12.♘g5 f5 13.♘h3 ♗e6 14.0-0 ♗f7 15.♕d2 ♘c6 16.♘f4 White sets up the blockade but so far has not made any real gains.

10. ... d6xe5

11. ♕d1xd8 ...

See Game 60 for what can happen when the queens stay on.

11. ... ♖f8xd8

12. c4-c5 ...

The pawn has to be pushed forwards when Black is unable to centralize his knight (12...♘d5?? 13.♖d1 ♗e6 14.♗c4 winning a piece due to the pin). This is clear from the variation 12.♘b5?! ♘c6 13.♘c7 ♖b8 14.c5 ♘d5 15.♘xd5 ♖xd5 16.♗c4 ♖d8 17.♘f3 ♗f5 18.0-0 ♗d3 19.♗xd3 ♖xd3 20.♖fd1 ♖bd8 21.♖xd3 ♖xd3 (Mazi – Knaller, Austria 2013) – here it is White who is fighting for equality. Given the additional possibility

14...♘d7 15.♗b5 ♘d4 16.♘e2 a6 17.♗a4 ♘f6 the early knight sortie should be ruled out.

12. ... ♘b6-d7

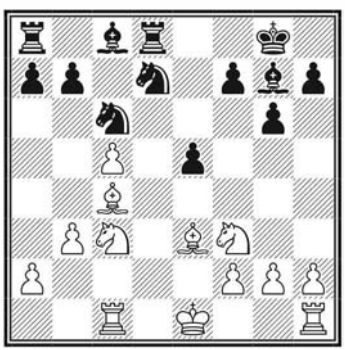
13. ♗f1-c4 ...

The manoeuvre ♘c3-e4-d6 should not be forgotten any more than the line with the queens still on the board. If 13.♘f3 ♘c6 14.♘e4 the black knight will follow the white one – 14...♘f6 15.♘d6 ♘e8. The continuation 16.♘xc8 ♖axc8 17.♗c4 ♘c7 18.0-0 ♘d5 19.♗g5 f6 20.♖fd1 ♘ce7 21.♗d2 ♔f8 22.b4 (Kadric – Bistric, Sarajevo 2014) failed to bring any advantage.

13. ... ♘b8-c6

14. ♘g1-f3 ...

After 14.♘e4 the invading knight threatens f7 and Black needs to find a different means of defense. 14... ♘f8 15.♘d6 ♘e6 16.♘f3 ♘cd4 is probably fine (or 14.♘f3 ♘a5 15.♗e2 ♘c6 16.♘b5 ♘f8 17.♘d6 ♘e6 18.♗c4 ♘cd4 is identical).



This position is a tabiya of the Voronezh Variation. Black needs to find a counter to the knight raids, above all ♘f3-g5. The attack on f7 forces the rook on d8 to an embarrassing retreat after 14...♘f6, 14...♘f8 or 14...♘d4. The rapid game Ivanchuk – Palatnik (on a ferry somewhere between Odessa and Istanbul, 2009) continued 14... ♘d4?! 15.♘g5 ♖f8 16.♘ce4 ♘f5 17.0-0 ♘f6 18.♖fd1 ♘xe4 19.♘xe4 ♘xe3 20.fe ♗h6 21.♔f2 ♖b8 22.b4 ♔g7 23.♘d6 ♗g5 24.♖d5 and White has a text book advantage on the queenside with a hint of counterplay by Black.

14. ... h7-h6

This prevents the knight sortie, whereas 14...♘a5 (Game 61) causes the bishop problems.

15. ♘c3-e4 ...

The knight heads to d6, and by the optimal route. If 15.♘b5 hidden chances for Black rise to the surface: 15...e4! 16.♘d2 ♘de5 17.♘xe4 ♘xc4 18.♖xc4 ♘e5 19.♖c2 (Kuba – Konopka, Austria 2007) 19...a6 20.♘bd6 f5 (with compensation) 21.♘xc8? ♖axc8 22.♘c3 f4! 23.♗d2 ♖xc5 24.♔d1 f3! (with a decisive advantage). If 15.0-0, then see the example from Miltner – Rudolph (Germany 2005): 15...♘f8 16.♘b5 ♗e6 17.♘d6 ♗xc4 18.♖xc4 ♖d7 19.b4 ♘e6 20.b5 ♘cd4 21.♗xd4 ed 22.♘e4 f5 (22...♖c7!? 23.♖fc1 d3) 23.♘ed2 ♖d5 24.♖fc1 b6 25.cb ab – and the position is equal.

15. ... ♘c6-a5

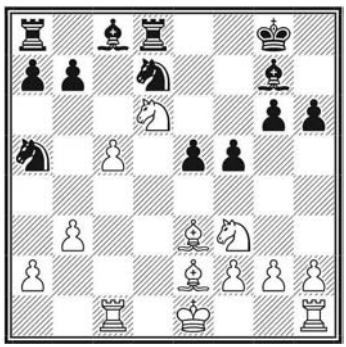
The defensive setup with 15...

♘f8 16.♘d6 ♖d7 17.0-0 ♖e7 is passive and contains a Pandora's box of tricks for White. For example 18.♖fd1 ♗g4 19.h3 ♗xf3 20.gf ♘e6 21.♗d5 ♖b8?! 22.♘xb7! ♘cd4 23.♗xe6 ♘e2+ 24.♔f1 ♘xc1 (L.Vajda – Sikula, Hungary 2002) 25.♘d8! and White is playing to win. On the other hand, he could have postponed the combinations with 21...♖d8 or 21...♘cd8.

16. ♗c4-e2 ...

The Grandmaster draw between Velicka and Konopka (Czech Republic 2013) made it hard to accuse the players of aggression: 16.♘d6 ♘xc4 17.♗xc4 ♘f8 18.♘xc8 ♖axc8 19.♔e2 ♘e6 20.♘d2 f5 21.f3 ♘d4+ 22.♗xd4 ed 23.♖e1 ♖d5 24.♔d3 ♖dxc5. However, it is worth looking at the bishop's travels. After 16.♗d5 Regec carefully equalized against Raetsky (Basel 2004): 16...♘f6 17.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 18.♖d1 ♔g7 19.0-0 ♗d7! 20.♖d2 ♗c6 21.♖fd1 ♗xd5 22.♖xd5 ♘c6 23.a3 ♖xd5 24.♖xd5 ♖d8 25.♖xd8+ ♗xd8 26.b4 a6. The variation 20.♗d2 ♗c6! 21.♗xf7!? ♖xd2 22.♘xd2 ♔xf7 23.b4 ♗a4 (T.Kosintseva – Anatsko, Chalkidiki 2001) 24.ba ♗xd1 25.♖xd1 ♖d8 26.♔f1 ♖d5 27.♔e2 ♖xc5 28.♖b1 ♖xa5 29.♖xb7+ ♔e6 30.♖b2 e4 31.♖c2 ♔d5 is more fun, although it looks equally level at this point.

16. ... f7-f5
17. ♘b5-d6 ...



Black's position looks dubious at first glance but in fact it's fine. 17... e4 18.♘d2 ♘e5 19.0-0 ♗e6 20.f3 ef 21.♘xf3 ♘f7 22.♗d2 ♘d6 23.♗xa5 b6 24.cb ♘b7 25.♗c3 ♗xc3 26.♖xc3 ab gradually brought him equality (Lyell – Schuh, Pardubice 2010), and it would be even better to move the knight from a5 to a more appropriate square. After 17...♘c6 18.♗c4 ♔h7 19.h4 (threatening 20.♘g5+!) 19...♗f8 20.h5 f4 21.hg+ ♔xg6 22.♗d2 ♘xc5 23.♘f7 ♖e8 24.b4 (Bachmann – Pajeken, Calvia 2004) 24...♘d3+! 26.♗xd3 ♔xf7 White has no advantage.

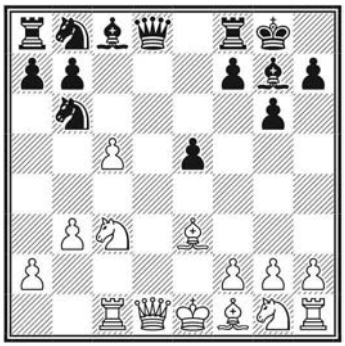
Game 60

G.Antal – V.Pechenkin

Edmonton 2009

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**e5xd6**	**c7xd6**
6.	**♘b1-c3**	**g7-g6**
7.	**♗c1-e3**	**♗f8-g7**

8. ♖a1-c1 0-0
9. b2-b3 e7-e5
10. d4xe5 d6xe5
11. c4-c5 ...



Without a deep analysis it's hard to see who benefits from keeping the queens on. Black's strongest piece is useful for both defense and counter attack, but her coordination with her team members is suboptimal.

11. ... ♘b6-d7
12. ♗f1-c4 ...

After 12.♘f3 ♘c6 13.♗b5 ♕a5 14.0-0 e4 15.♘d4 ♘xd4 16.♗xd4 ♘e5 17.♕e2 ♘d3 18.♗xg7 ♘xc1 19.♖xc1 ♔xg7 20.♘e4 ♗g4 21.f3 ♕a3 22.♕d2 ♗e6 a draw was agreed by two players who had already attracted a lot of attention. That said, Vachier-Lagrave and Karjakin were competing in the world under 12 championships at the time (Oropesa 2001). 18.♗xd3 ed 19.♕xd3 ♖d8 20.♘b5 ♕xa2 21.♕e3 ♗xd4 22.♘xd4 is probably the best way for White to fight for an advantage, while Black should have resorted to 13...e4!? 14.♗xc6 ♗xc3+ 15.♖xc3 bc 16.♘d2 ♕e7 17.0-0 ♗a6 18.♘c4 ♘e5 19.♕d6 ♖fe8 20.♘xe5 ♕xe5 21.♕xe5 ♖xe5 22.♖e1 ♗d3 where he is playing for a draw.

It's not easy for Black after 12.♘e4!? (in order to transfer the knight to d6). The best continuation for Black is probably 12...♘c6 13.♗c4 ♕a5+ 14.♕d2 ♕xd2+ 15.♗xd2 ♘f6, trying to simplify, or 14.♗d2 ♕c7 with the idea of undermining White with b7-b6.

12. ... ♕d8-a5

A more frequent move here is 12... ♘c6. Then, if White plays 13.♘ge2, apart from 13...♕a5 (transposing to the game analyzed) another good move for Black is 13...♘f6 14.♘b5 ♘a5 15.0-0 ♘xc4 16.♖xc4 ♗e6 17.♖c1 Nd5. Whereas if White plays 13.Nf3 moving the knight to f6 is not good for Black due to the queen exchange and he should instead play 13...♕a5. After 14.0-0 ♘xc5 15.b4! ♘xb4 16.♘d5 ♘c6 17.♘e7+ ♔h8 18.♘xc6 bc 19.♘g5 ♘e6 20.♘xe6 ♗xe6 21.♗xe6 fe 22.♖xc6 ♕xa2 Rovid versus Krizsany (Budapest 1996) the game soon ended in a draw, but if White plays the obvious 17.♗xc5 ♕xc5 18.♘c7 ♕e7 19.♘xa8 ♗g4 20.♕b3 ♖xa8 Black is struggling to find compensation for the exchange. That is easier to do after 16...♘e4!? 17.♕e1 ♘c6 18.♕xa5 ♘xa5 19.♘c7 ♘xc4 20.♖xc4 ♘d6 21.♖cc1 ♗f5 22.♘xa8 ♖xa8. The tactic 16...♘xd5 17.♕xd5 b6! 18.♕xa8

♗b7 leads to simplifications and an equal ending: 19.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 20.♖xc5 ♖xa8 21.♖xa5 ba 22.♘g5+ ♔g8 23.♖d1 ♗c6 24.♖c1 ♗d7 25.♖c7 ♗f5 (Morano – Poleschi, correspondence game 2000) or 19.♕xf8+ ♔xf8 20.♘g5 ♗a6 21.♗xc5 bc 22.♗xa6 ♕xa6 23.♖xc5 ♗h6 24.♖xe5 ♗xg5 25.♖xg5 ♕xa2, ½ - ½ (Bokros – F.Grunberg, Szombathely 2003).

13. ♘g1-e2 ...

Now, 13.♘f3 isn't much use because of 13...e4 14.♘d4 ♘xc5. After 13.♗d2!? ♕xc5 14.♘d5 ♘c6!? 15.♘c7 ♖b8 16.♘e6! ♕a3 17.♘xf8 ♘xf8 Black has fair compensation for the exchange, while if White continues 14.♘b5 ♘a6 15.♗xf7+ ♖xf7 16.♖xc5 ♘dxc5 White is not bothered by giving up his queen (17.♕e2 ♗f5 18.♘d6 ♘d3+ 19.♔f1 ♘xf2! 20.♘xf7 ♗d3 21.♔xf2 ♗xe2 22.♘xe5 ♗d1 23.♘gf3 ♗xf3 24.♘xf3 with a drawn position).

14. ... ♘b8-c6

14. a2-a3 ...

If 14.0-0?! ♘xc5 15.b4 ♘xb4 16.♘d5 ♘ba6 (White – Summerscale, England 2006) White has sufficient compensation for one pawn, but definitely not for two.

14. ... ♘c6-d4?!

The Canadian chess player is following the path of Grandmaster Baburin, but he stumbles upon a strong refutation. In the fun line 14...♖d8 15.b4!? ♕xa3 16.♘b5 ♕xb4 17.♗d2 ♕xc5 18.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 19.♕b3+ ♔f8 20.♖xc5 ♘xc5 21.♕a3 b6 Black finds himself without his queen, but he has picked up a rook, bishop and all of his opponent's queenside pawns for good measure – and where is White's position bad? Or 15.♕d5 e4!? 16.♕xf7+ ♔h8 17.♗g5 ♖f8 18.♕d5 ♘xc5 19.b4 ♘xd3+ 20.♕xd3 ed 21.ba de with a satisfactory position.

15. 0-0! ...

After accepting the pawn sacrifice Rowson had problems with his king in a game against Baburin: 15.♘xd4 ed 16.♗xd4 ♖e8+ 17.♔f1 ♗xd4 18.♕xd4 ♕xa3 19.♕f4?! (19.♘e2! ♕a5 20.h4! ♘e5 21.♘f4 was stronger, in order to attack the black king in turn) 19...♘f6 20.♘b5 ♕b2 21.♘d6 ♗e6!? 22.♖d1 ♖ad8 (Rowson – Baburin, Port Erin 1999). A craftier move was 15.b4!? ♕xa3 16.♖b1, threatening to trap the queen via ♗e3-c1. After that, Black should play 16...♘xc5 17.bc ♕xc5 17.♗d3 ♖d8 with three pawns for the piece.

15. ... ♕a5xc5

It would be a serious error to win back the pawn on a3: 15...♕xa3?! 16.♘xd4 ed 17.♘b5 ♕b4 18.♗xd4.

16. ♘c3-b5 ♕c5-e7

17. ♘e2xd4 e5xd4

18. ♗e3xd4 ♗g7xd4

If 18...♖d8 White can choose from a number of replies, of which 19.♗xf7+!? ♔xf7 20.♖c7! with a 'dead' pin looks like the most impressive option.

19. ♕d1xd4 ♕e7-e5

20. ♕d4-h4 ♘d7-b6
21. ♖f1-e1 ♕e5-b2
22. ♖c1-b1 ♕e5-g7
23. ♘b5-c7 ♗c8-f5
24. ♘c7xa8 ♘b6xc4
25. ♖b1-a1?! ...

26.♖fd1 ♘b2 27.♖d8 was more precise, as now, with the help of 26... ♘xa3 27.♖xa3 ♕c3 28.♕e7 ♖xa8, Black has at least got a pawn for the exchange and chances of resisting.

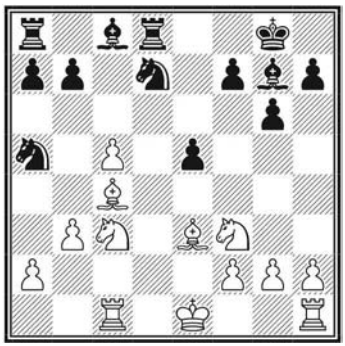
25. ... ♘c4-e5?!
26. ♘a8-c7 ♘e5-d3
27. ♘c7-e8 ♕g7-c3
28. ♕h4-f6 ♕c3xf6
29. ♘e8xf6+ ♔g8-g7
30. ♘f6-e8+

1-0

The white knight deserves a horse-shaped statue for this game!

Game 61
D.Sitnikov – M.Chernov
Novokuznetsk 2011

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
5. e5xd6 c7xd6
6. ♘b1-c3 g7-g6
7. ♗c1-e3 ♗f8-g7
8. ♖a1-c1 0-0
9. b2-b3 e7-e5
10. d4xe5 d6xe5
11. ♕d1xd8 ♖f8xd8
12. c4-c5 ♘b6-d7
13. ♘g1-f3 ♘b8-c6
14. ♗f1-c4 ♘c6-a5



15. ♗c4-e2 ...

The battle between Sanakoev and Honfi (correspondence game 1993-95) has become widely known: 15.♗g5 ♖e8 (Sanakoev's suggestion 15...♖f8 16.♗e7 ♘xc4 17.bc e4 18.♗xf8 ef 19.♗xg7 fg 20.♖g1 ♔xg7 21.♖xg2 leads to a better position for White) 16.♘b5 e4! 17.♘c7 ef 18.♘xe8 fg 19.♖g1 ♘xc4 20.♖xc4 ♘e5 21.♖c3 ♗g4 22.♘xg7 ♘f3+ 23.♖xf3 ♗xf3 24.♗f6 ♖c8 25.♔d2 ♖xc5 26.♗d4 ♖d5 27.♔e3 ♔f8 28.h4 h5 29.b4 b6 30.a4 ♖d7 31.b5 ♗d5 32.♗f6 ♖d6 33.♗b2 ♖d7, ½ - ½. The 'fianchettoed' knight failed to leave g7 (where it ended up due to a forced line), and the extra piece proved insufficient for victory.

The last word in the 15.♗g5 line belongs to Zoltan Varga, and we cite here his authoritative 'statement'. And so: 15...♘xc4!? 16.♗xd8 ♘b2 17.0-0 ♘d3 18.♖cd1 ♘7xc5 19.♗e7 ♗f5 20.♘h4 ♗e6 21.b4 e4! 22.♘xe4 ♘xe4 23.♖xd3 ♗c4 24.♖d7 ♗xf1 25.♔xf1 b5 26.♘f3 h6, ½ - ½ (Csebe – Z.Varga,

Budapest 2013). After 18.♖c2 ♘7xc5 19.♗e7 ♗f5 20.♘h4 ♗e6 21.♖d1 b6 22.♖cd2 ♖e8 23.♗xc5 ♘xc5 a draw is the most likely outcome.

Breaking the rules of detective stories (after all, this is not a detective story) we highlight that the bishop's retreat to e2 is usually met by an attack on White's pawn structure with 15...b6, and this is a good idea. If 15.♗b5 this attack is impossible, which is also the case after 15...a6 16.♗e2. But adding a7-a6 further on prevents the bishop from returning to b5 and, very importantly, the knight getting to b5. After 16...♘c6 17.♘e4 ♘f6 18.♘d6 ♘e8 (we have seen this persecution before) 19.♘c4 h6 20.0-0 ♗e6 21.♖fd1 ♗xc4 22.♗xc4 (Jurcik – Hudecek, Czech Republic 2010) 22...♘f6 the position is about equal.

15. ... b7-b6

This move not only challenges White's spatial advantage but also frees up a square for the queen's bishop. Miroshnichenko versus Zoltan Almasi (Germany 2004) also brought the bishop out of its dungeon, but failed to prevent the Hungarian from gradually improving his position: 15...♘f8 16.♘b5 ♘e6 17.♘d6 h6 18.0-0 ♖b8 19.♖fd1 ♘c6 20.♗c4 ♗d7 21.♖d2 ♘a5 22.♗d5 ♗c6 23.♗xe6 fe 24.b4 (24.♘h4!? ♔h7 25.♘xg6 ♔xg6 26.b4) 24...♗xf3 25.gf ♘c6 26.a3.

It makes sense to bring the knight away from the edge and then centralize it. After 15...♘c6 16.0-0 ♘d4 17.♗xd4 ed 18.♘b5 a6 19.♘bxd4 ♘xc5 20.♖xc5 ♗xd4 21.♘xd4 ♖xd4 22.♖c7 ♖b8 23.♖d1 ♖xd1+ 24.♗xd1 ♗e6 the endgame is equal (Raetsky – Santo Roman, Sautron 2004). 16.♘b5 ♘f8 17.♘d6 ♘e6 18.♗c4 ♘cd4 19.♘g5 ♘xg5 20.♗xg5 ♖d7 21.0-0 ♖c7 22.♗d8 ♖d7 23.♗g5 ♖c7 24.♗e3 ♗e6 25.♗xe6 ♘xe6 26.♖fd1 is hardly better (Mitkov – Toth, Rio de Janeiro 2000). The Macedonian Grandmaster 'stretched his muscles' in repeating moves, but it is hard to achieve more in this position.

16. c5xb6 ...

Thanks to this exchange White completes his development. After 16.♘a4 ♘xc5 17.♘xc5 bc 18.♖xc5 ♗f8!? 19.♖xe5 ♘c6 20.♖e4 ♗b4+ 21.♔f1 a5 22.♗g5 ♖d6 (Heltzel – Zaragatski, Vlissingen 2009) he didn't have a spare tempo to castle, meaning that Black had obvious compensation for the pawn. Another good continuation for Black is 18...e4 19.♘d2 ♘b7 20.♖c6 ♘d6 21.0-0 ♗b7 22.♖c7 ♗d5 23.♗a6 ♗f8 24.♖fc1 ♘f5 with gradual equality (Pavasovic – Shabalov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2007).

Somewhat less frequently White creates a defended passed pawn. But in the game Swinkels – Zomer (Vlissingen 2009) the pawn on c6 did not retain such a privileged

status for long: 16.b4 ♘c6 17.b5 ♘d4 18.c6 ♘c5 19.0-0 a6 20.♖fd1 ab 21.♗xb5, and the most accurate continuation here is 21...♗e6 22.♘g5 ♖dc8.

16. ... ♘d7xb6
17. 0-0 ♗c8-b7
18. ♘f3-g5 ...

Sitnikov rearranges his minor pieces instead of the more natural 18.♖fd1 ♘c6 19.♘b5. A fairly sharp struggle ensued in Kekelidze versus Kopylov (Hamburg 2006): 19...♘d5 20.♗g5 ♖d7 21.♗c4 ♘cb4 22.a3 ♘a2 23.♖c2 a6 24.♖xa2 ab 25.♗xb5 ♖c7 26.♖ad2?! h6 27.♗c4 ♘c3 28.♖d8+ ♔h7 29.♖xa8 ♗xa8. Here, White should have gone for a draw with 30.♖d2 e4 31.♗d8 ♖c8 32.♘e1 ♗d5 33.♗a5 ♗xc4 34.bc ♘b1 35.♖d7 ♘xa3 36.♖xf7. In the event of 26.♗d2 Lakdawala suggested 26... e4 27.♘g5 ♖e7 28.a4 h6 29.♘h3 e3 30.♗e1 g5! – Black has taken the enemy knight out of the game and shouldn't have to worry about the connected passed pawns.

18. ... ♘a5-c6

Planless play by Black as seen in the game Djokic – Lukic (Serbia 2011), led after 18...h6 19.♘ge4 ♘d5 20.♘xd5 ♗xd5 21.♘c3 ♗b7 22.♘b5 ♗a6 23.♖fe1 ♗xb5 24.♗xb5 a6 25.♗f1 to a technically won position for White. It would have been better to allow the exchange of his active light-squared bishop and thereby revive his dark-squared one, moving it to the a3-f8 diagonal.

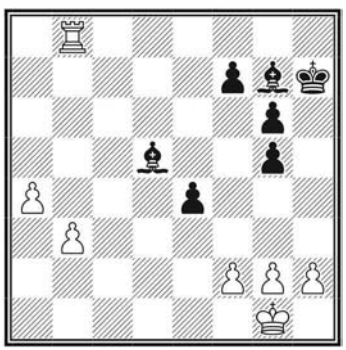
19. ♗e2-f3 ♖a8-c8?!

Chernov miscalculates in a very instructive way. He should not have delayed with h7-h6. Obviously, after 19...h6 20.♘b5 hg 21.♗xc6 ♗xc6 22.♖xc6 g4 23.a4 Black can draw at best but this does seem to be achievable.

20. ♗e3xb6 a7xb6
21. ♘c3-d5 h7-h6
22. ♘d5xb6 h6xg5

In the variation 22...♖c7 23.♘e4 f5 24.♘c5 ♘d4 25.♘xb7 ♘xf3+ 26.gf ♖xb7 27.♘c4 Black's chances of a draw are already doubtful. His kingside pawn majority is held back by White's broken pawn structure.

23. ♘b6xc8 ♖d8xc8
24. ♗f3xc6 ♖c8xc6
25. ♖c1xc6 ♗b7xc6
26. ♖f1-c1 ♗c6-d5
27. ♖c1-c8+ ♔g8-h7
28. ♖c8-b8 e5-e4
29. a2-a4 ...



Black's position is difficult. The black king is out of play, while his bishops are fully occupied with preventing White's passed pawns

from advancing. On the other hand, White's king isn't contributing to the pawn advance either, and the best continuation would be 29...♗c3 30.b4 ♔g7 31.♖d8 ♗b3 32.b5 ♗xa4 33.b6 ♗e5 with a bishop versus rook battle ahead on the same side of the board. However, the game ends with a blunder.

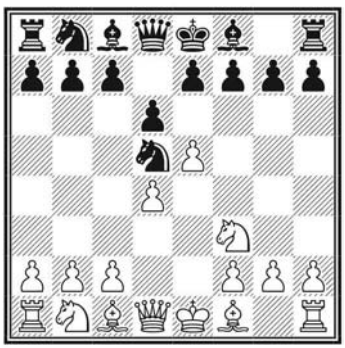
29. ... **♗g7-d4?**
30. ♖b8-d8 **e4-e3**
31. ♔g1-f1
1-0

White has an equally minimal advantage after both 11.c5 and 11.♕xd8 ♖xd8 12.c5, and the clear preference for exchanging queens in games played is simply a flight of fashion. Black needs to play carefully to avoid getting into hot water. On the whole, the Voronezh Variation has proved its worth and its strong popularity is fully justified.

Part 12 Various replies to 4.♘f3

Chapter 58. Rare replies to 4.♘f3

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**...**



This is the most natural continuation and, compared with 4.c4, is played almost twice as often. To discuss this matter at length is not necessary here. We merely note that the present chapter covers the rare responses to this move, while Chapter 59 is devoted to 4...♘b6, and Chapters 60 and 61 focus on 4...♘c6. The fundamental continuations 4...g6, 4...de and 4...♗g4 are analyzed in parts 13, 14 and 15 respectively.

4. ... ♗c8-f5

This bishop move is sometimes played with the aim of avoiding main theory. It's not a good idea to block the bishop's mobility. Moreover, if 4...e6 is simply passive (and is analyzed via a different move order (3...e6) in Chapter 28), then 4...♘d7?! allows White to play the standard tactic 5.c4 ♘5b6 6.e6! After 6...fe 7.♗d3 ♘f6 8.♘g5 g6 9.♕c2 ♖g8?! 10.0-0 c6 (Bromberger – Schupp, Nuremberg 2006) ♘g5xh7 practically wins at any time, and even if Black plays the better 9... ♗h6 10.h4 White simply has to wait for the best moment to win back the pawn with ♘g5xe6.

4...c6 (without transposing back into one of the main lines) is considered in Chapter 62.

5. ♗f1-d3 ...

After 5.♗c4 e6 6.0-0 the Megabase doesn't contain a single game (!) with 6...♘b4!?, although it's obvious that after 7.♗b3 d5

the closed position means that the career of Black's light-squared bishop should turn out to be more successful than White's. After 5.♗e2 e6 6.0-0 only one (!) game is known with 6...♘b4!?, although why would 7.♘a3 de 8.♘xe5 ♘d7 9.♘xd7 ♕xd7 be bad for Black? In any event, Keschitz achieved an extremely solid position against Golubov (Budapest 2014) with 7... d5 8.c3 ♘4a6 9.♘c2 ♗e7 10.♘e3 ♗g6 11.b4 c6 12.♘d2 ♘c7 13.♘b3 0-0 14.f4 ♘d7 15.a4 ♗e4 16.♘d2 f5.

Obviously, 5.c4 should be countered with the same ♘c6-b4 move. Fedorchuk didn't get any serious advantage against Brochet (Evry 2005): 6.♘a3 e6 7.ed cd (7...♗xd6!?) 8.♗e2 ♗e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♗d2 ♘8c6 11.♕a4 d5 12.♘b5 ♗c2 13.b3 ♗d3 14.b3 ♗d3 15.♗xd3 ♘xd3 16.♘e1 ♘cb4 17.♘xd3 ♘xd3 18.♘c3 ♕e8 19.♕xe8 ♖fxe8.

It is also worth testing 5.♘h4!? Then 5...♗c8!? invites White to find an unobvious alternative to returning his knight to f3. Kristjansson gained an advantage against Karttunen (Heraklio 2007) after 6.g3 de 7.de ♘c6 8.♗g2 ♘db4 9.♗d2 g5!? 10.♘f3 g4 11.♘h4 ♗g7 12.a3 ♘d5 13.♕e2 ♘cxe5 14.♘c3 ♘xc3?! 15.♗xc3 ♘f3+ 16.♗xf3 ♗xc3+ 17.bc gf 18.♕xf3 ♕d6 19.0-0 c6 20.♖fe1 0-0 21.♕e3 ♖e8 22.♖ad1 ♕g6 23.♕c5, but this isn't too convincing: the continuation 14...c6 15.0-0-0 e6 would have firmly supported the knight, while 9...♗g4!? promises equal chances in the complications – 10.♗xc6+ bc 11.f3 ♕d4! 12.fg ♕xb2 13.♗xb4 ♕xe5+ 14.♕e2 ♕xa1 15.♕e4 0-0-0 16.0-0 ♕d4+ 17.♕xd4 ♖xd4 18.c3 ♖d7.

5. ... ♗f5xd3

Caution! If 5...♗g6?, then the standard pawn thrust e5-e6 virtually knocks out Black. It's worth here recalling the famous game Bogoljubow – Tarrasch (Breslau 1925): 6.c4 ♘b6 7.♗xg6 hg 8.e6! fe 9.♕d3 ♕c8 10.♕xg6+ ♔d8 11.♕f7 ♘xc4 12.♘bd2 ♘xd2 13.♗xd2 g5 14.d5 c5 15.♗c3 – the "chess world's teacher" was probably never humiliated like this. Obviously, it's better here to begin with the exchange of bishops, as otherwise Black might wake up and take on d3.

The only way to gain anything out of 5...♕d7 is by playing ♘c6-b4, aiming at White's Achilles heel. The game Kavalek – Ljubojevic (Lanzarote 1973) continued 6.0-0 ♘b4 7.♗xf5 ♕xf5 8.c3 ♘c2 9.♘h4 ♕e4 10.♘d2 ♕d3 11.♖b1 de 12.♘df3?! ♘b4 13.♗d2 ♘4c6 14.♕b3 b5?! 15.♘e5 ♘xe5 16.de e6 17.♘f3 ♘c6 18.a4 b4 19.♕d1 ♖b8 20.cb ♘xb4 21.♕c1 – Black didn't have time to complete his development. However, if Black plays 14...♕a6 15.♘e5 ♘xe5 16.de e6 then he shouldn't have any problems – in development or anywhere else. That said,

Black's whole idea is flawed, and 12.♘df3 (to which Bagirov assigns an exclamation-mark) should be changed in favor of 12.de e6 13.♕f3 ♕xf3 14.♘hxf3, thereby not letting the knight out of its prison cell.

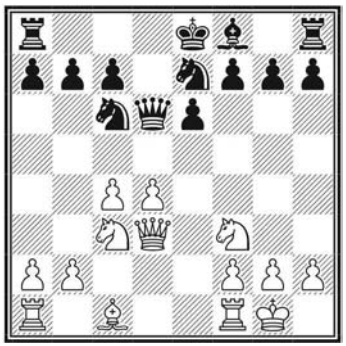
6. ♕d1xd3 ♘b8-c6
7. 0-0 ...

After 7.♕b3 e6 8.ed ♕xd6 So, when playing Dzhumaev (Vietnam 2008), avoided the unclear line 9.♕xb7 ♖b8 10.♕a6 ♘xd4 11.♕a4+ ♘c6 12.0-0, and instead gained an advantage with 9.0-0 0-0-0 10.♖d1 ♘f4?! (10...♘b6 is more reliable) 11.♘c3 g5 12.♗xf4 ♕xf4 13.d5. This advantage would endure even after Black's best continuation: 13...ed 14.♘xd5 ♕xd5 15.♘e3 ♖xd1+ 16.♖xd1 ♕g6 17.♖d5.

7. ... e7-e6
8. c2-c4 ♘d5-e7

The drawback of 8...♘b6 is that it's impossible to meet e5xd6 by capturing with the queen (which is a typical recapture throughout the Alekhine Defense). Gervasio gained equal chances in his game with Guido (Agneaux 1995) after 9.ed ed 10.d5 ♘e5 11.♘xe5 de 12.♕e4 ♕f6 13.♘c3 ♖c8 14.b3 ♕b4 15.♗b2 ♗xc3 16.♗xc3 ed 17.♕xe5+ ♕xe5 18.♗xe5 0-0. However, after 14.de ♕xe6 15.♕xb7 ♕xc4 16.♕xa7 ♗c5 17.♗e3 White won a pawn with no compensation for his opponent.

9. e5xd6 ♕d8xd6
10. ♘b1-c3 ...



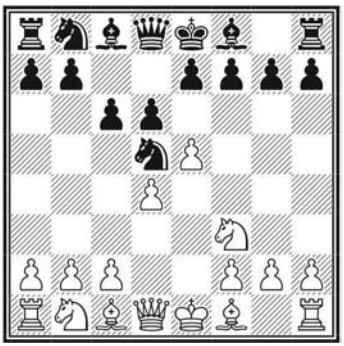
Grandmaster Marat Dzhumaev has experienced clear difficulties in the line 4...♗f5. After 10...0-0-0 11.♘b5 ♕d7 12.♗f4 a6 13.♘xc7 ♘g6 14.♗g3 ♗d6 15.♘a8 Bobras (Cappelle-la-Grande 2007) cleverly extracted his knight from danger and ended up a whole pawn ahead. In any event Black is worse, for example after 10...♘g6 11.d5 ♘ce5 12.♘xe5 ♕xe5 13.♗e3.

Game 62
K.Kulaots – M.Grunberg
Hungary 2008

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 c7-c6

Diagram

Black strengthens his centralized knight and at the same time frees up a square for it that appears safer than b6.



5. c2-c4 ...

In reply to 5.h3 the bishop makes do with the f5 square. After 5... ♗f5 6.♗d3 ♗xd3 7.♕xd3 de 8.de e6 9.0-0 ♘d7 10.♕e4 h6 11.♘bd2 ♕c7 12.♖e1 0-0-0 13.a3 c5?! 14.b3 (if 14.c4 ♘e7 15.b4 g5 16.b5 ♘g6 17.♗b2 ♗g7 the siege of the e5 pawn somewhat cramps White) 14...♔b8 15.♗b2 ♗e7 16.c4 ♘5b6 17.♕g4 ♖hg8 18.♕h5 ♖gf8 19.♘e4 ♘c8 20.♖ad1 Landa established a solid initiative in his game against Agdestein (Cappelle-la-Grande 1999). 13...♘c5 14.♕g4 g5 would have been significantly stronger, and in reply to b2-b4 the knight comfortably settles into a4.

5.♗e2 de 6.♘xe5 is analyzed elsewhere via the move order 4... de 5.♘xe5 c6 6.♗e2. The game Smirin – Zelcic (Macedonia 1995) continued 6.de ♗f5 7.♘d4 e6 8.♘xf5 ef 9.0-0 ♘d7 10.♗c4 ♘7b6 11.♗b3 ♗c5 12.♕f3 g6 13.♘c3 0-0 14.♖d1 ♕e7 15.♘xd5 cd 16.♗xd5 ♘xd5 17.♖xd5 ♖fd8 18.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 19.♗f4 ♗d4 20.c3 ♗xe5 21.♗xe5 ♕xe5 22.♕xb7 ♖b8 23.♕xa7 ♖xb2 with equality thanks to the activity of Black's pieces. The continuation 16.♗f4 followed by doubling rooks on the d-file is better than immediately winning the pawn; at the same time, 11...♕e7 and 12...♖d8 are improvements for Black.

5. ... ♘d5-c7

The knight often moves from this square to e6, from where it will control a number of important squares (above all d4)

6. ♘b1-c3 ...

See also the following example of prophylaxis after White chases the knight away from the game Aravindh – Drazic (Chennai 2013): 6.h3 de 7.♘xe5 ♘d7 8.♘f3 g6 9.♘c3 ♗g7 10.♗e3 0-0 11.♗c2 e5 12.0-0 ed 13.♘xd4 ♖e8 14.♕c2 ♘f8 15.♖ad1 ♕e7 16.♖fe1 ♘ce6 17.♘f3 ♘c5 18.♗f1 ♗f5 19.♕c1 a5? 20.♗f4 ♘fe6 21.♗d6 ♕f6 22.♗e5 ♕e7 23.g4 with material gains. With the help of 19...h5 20.♘d4 ♘fe6 21.♘xf5 gf Black could have avoided losses, albeit at the cost of messing up his pawn structure, while 12...f5!? 13.de ♘e6 would have promised good chances.

The most accurate move is probably 6.♗e2. After 6...g6 7.ed ♕xd6 8.♘c3 ♗g7 9.♗e3 0-0 10.♕d2 ♗g4 11.♖d1 ♕b4 12.♘e4 ♕xd2+ 13.♘exd2 ♘d7 14.h3 ♗xf3 15.♘xf3 b5 16.♔d2 ♖fd8 17.♖c1 ♘b6 18.cb ♘xb5 19.♖xc6 ♘xd4 20.♘xd4 ♗xd4 21.♗xd4 ♖xd4

22.♔c1 ♖c8 23.♖xc8+ ♘xc8 24.♖d1 ♖xd1+ 25.♗xd1 Simacek carefully tried to exploit the minimal advantage of bishop versus knight in his game against Konopka (Czech Republic 2013). The black queen's sortie looks successful, hence White should have preferred 11.♗f4, tying Black's strongest piece to defending the knight. It's much easier for White to play due to his spatial advantage.

6. ... ♗c8-g4

In the game Thesing – M.Grunberg (Eforie ♘ord 2000) the German master demonstrated how not to play the Exchange System: 6...♘d7 7.ed ed 8.♗d3 ♗e7 9.♕c2 ♘f6 10.♗e3 ♗g4 11.0-0-0?! d5 12.cd ♘fxd5 13.♘xd5 ♘xd5 14.a3 ♗xf3 15.gf g6 16.♔b1 ♕b6 17.♔a2 0-0-0. That said, the exchange is usually to White's advantage, which White could have underscored by playing the prophylactic 10.h3.

It's more logical to continue 6... de 7.♘xe5 ♘d7 with an attack on White's centralized knight. Black has a lot of problems after 8.♘xd7 ♗xd7 9.♗f4 ♘e6 10.♗e3 g6 11.d5 ♘g7 12.♗d4 f6 13.♘e4 ♘f5 14.♗c3 cd 15.cd ♕b6 16.h4 h5 17.♗c4 ♗g7 18.♕d3 (L.Vajda – Suba, Brasov 2011), but if he instead plays 13... ♗f5 14.♕f3 e5 16.♗c3 cd 17.cd a6 his defense sorts itself out. The continuation 8.♘f3 g6 9.♗e2 ♗g7 10.0-0 is considered in Chapter 68 via the move order 4...de 5.♘xe5 c6 6.♗e2 ♘d7 7.♘f3 g6 8.0-0 ♗g7 9.c4 ♘c7 10.♘c3.

7. h2-h3 ...

Here 7.♗e2 doesn't give White anything due to 7...♗xf3 8.♗xf3 de 9.de ♕xd1+ 10.♗xd1 ♘d7 11.f4 and, for example, 11...g5!? 12.fg h6. After 7.ed ed 8.h3 ♗h5 9.g4 ♗g6 10.♕b3 b6 11.♗e3 ♗e7 12.♗g2 0-0 13.h4 h5 14.gh ♗xh5 15.♘g5 ♖e8 16.♘e2 ♗xe2 17.♔xe2 (McShane – Baburin, Kilkenny 1998) the most principled continuation is 17...♗xg5 18.hg ♕xg5 19.♖ag1 ♕f6 20.♔d2 ♘e6 or 19.♖h2 f5 20.♔f1 ♕g4 21.♕d1 ♕xd1+ 22.♖xd1 d5 with approximately equal chances. Apart from McShane other strong players also found it impossible to avoid the temptation of g2-g4, although this actually baits Black into counterplay. 9.♗d3, followed by 0-0, ♖f1-e1 and ♗c1-f4 looks more solid.

7. ... ♗g4xf3

8. ♕d1xf3 ♘c7-e6

After the exchange of bishops the black pawns are asking to be moved to light squares: 8...d5 9.♗e3 e6 10.♗e2 ♗e7 11.♕g4 0-0 12.0-0 ♘d7 13.♗h6 ♘e8 14.cd cd 15.♗d3 a6 16.♗e3 ♘c7 17.♖ac1 f5 18.ef ♘xf6 19.♕e2 (Kindermann – Jugelt, Germany 1999). However, here Black has failed to equalize, as he only managed to liquidate his opponent's spatial advantage at the cost of deforming his pawn backbone.

9. ♗c1-e3 d6xe5

10. d4xe5 ♘b8-d7
11. ♕f3-e4 ...

It's useful to keep the queen in the center. After 11.♕g3 ♕a5 12.f4 g5! 13.f5 ♘g7 14.♕xg5 ♕xe5 15.g4?! (15.♗d3 ♘h5! 16.0-0-0 ♘df6) 15...h5 16.0-0-0 hg 17.♗d4 ♖h5 Al Sayed found himself a pawn down in his game with Z.Varga (Budapest 2001), and a couple of moves later, after playing 18.♕d2?! (instead of 18.♕xg4 ♕xf5) 18...♕c7 19.♗e2 ♘xf5, he found himself two pawns down.

11. ... g7-g5

If 11...♕a5 12.f4 g5 then strengthening the pawn chain with 13.g3 accords Black excellent piece play – 13...gf 14.gf ♘dc5 15.♕f5 ♘a4! 16.♗d2 ♗h6! But if 13.fg ♕xe5 14.0-0-0 with the bishop pair White has nothing to worry about.

12. h2-h4 ♗f8-g7
13. h4xg5 ♗g7xe5
14. ♗f1-e2 ♗e5xc3+
15. b2xc3 ♕d8-a5
16. 0-0 ...

Although it's a shame to make an effort to have to defend disparate pawns, 16.♕c2!? was worth serious consideration. Then 16...♘xg5? is refuted by the pin 17.♖h5.

16. ... ♕a5xc3

Now 16...♘xg5 17.♕c2 ♖g8 is fine for Black, so it's unclear whether he made the best choice here.

17. ♖a1-b1 0-0-0
18. c4-c5!? ...

This sacrifice works fine, but it would have been objectively stronger to revive the light-squared bishop with 18.♗g4 ♕e5 19.♕d3.

18. ... ♘d7xc5
19. ♕e4-g4 ...



19. ... ♖d8-d4!?

Grunberg carried out a return exchange sac, having decided that the Estonian Grandmaster's threats are too dangerous. Houdini considers chances to be equal here: 19...♕e5 20.♖fc1 ♖d7 21.♗f3 (threatening 22.♖xc5! ♘xc5 23.♗xc6!) 21...♕d6 22.♖d1 ♕e5 23.♖xd7 ♔xd7 24.♗xc5 ♕xc5 25.♖xb7+ ♔c8 26.♖b1 ♖d8.

20. ♗e3xd4 ♕c3xd4
21. ♕g4-h3 ...

Kulaots is not yet ready to exchange queens. If 21.♕xd4 ♘xd4 22.♗g4+ ♔c7 23.♖fe1 e6 24.♖bd1 ♘b5 25.♖e3 ♘d6 Black's defense holds.

21. ... ♔c8-b8

The queen's retreat prompts Black to spirit his king away in the corner. On the other hand, 21... h5!? 22.gh ♕f4 23.h7 ♕e4 24.♗g4

♕xh7 forces exchanges after which the king is best placed in the center.

22. ♗e2-f3 ♔b8-a8
23. ♕h3-f5 ♕d4-f4
24. ♕f5xf4 ♘e6xf4
25. ♖f1-e1 ♘f8-e6
26. ♗f3-h5 ♖h8-f8
27. ♖e1-e3 ♘e6-f4
28. ♗h5-f3 ♘f4-e6
29. ♗f3-h5 b7-b6

Why didn't Mihai repeat moves? Probably because the bishop could have changed direction: 29...♘xf4 30.♗f3 ♘fe6 31.♗g4!? ♖g8 32.f4 ♘xf4 33.♖xe7 ♘d5 34.♖xf7 a6 35.♗f3 ♖xg5 36.♖xh7, and Black is not guaranteed a draw here.

30. g2-g3 ♔a8-b8
31. ♔g1-g2 ♔b8-c7
32. f2-f4 b6-b5

Kulaots has connected his pawns in a chain, and after 33.♖h1!? could have got to the weakness on h7 followed by laying siege to the f7 pawn. However, an attack along the c-file looks even stronger, and in retrospect it wasn't a good idea to play 29...b6.

33. ♖b1-c1 ♔c7-b6
34. ♖e3-c3 b5-b4
35. ♖c3-c4 ♘c5-d3
36. ♖c4xc6+ ♔b6-b7
37. ♖c1-c4 a7-a5
38. ♗h5xf7? ...

White had a pretty yet simple win with 38.f5! ♘g7 39.♖c7+ ♔b8 40.♗g4 ♘e5 41.f6! gf 42.♖c8+ ♖xc8 43.♖xc8+ ♔b7 44.gf ♘h5 45.♖c5.

38. ... ♘e6xf4+
39. g3xf4 ♖f8xf7
40. ♔g2-g3 ♘d3xf4
41. ♖c6-c7+ ♔b7-b6
42. ♖c4-c6+ ♔b6-b5
43. ♖c6-c5+ ♔b5-b6
44. ♖c7-c6+ ♔b6-b7
45. ♖c6-h6 ♘f4-e2+
46. ♔g3-g2 ♘e2-f4+
47. ♔g2-g3 ♘f4-e2+

½ - ½

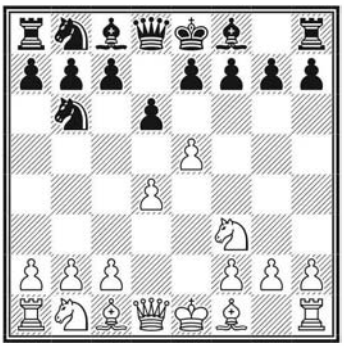
In response to 4...♗f5 White should immediately offer to exchange bishops if he wants to ensure an advantage. The move 4... c6 looks more solid – White has to make do with his familiar territorial advantage.

Chapter 59. 4...♘b6

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 ♘d5-b6

Diagram

This is an unusually looking prophylactic move: anticipating an attack (by the pawn or bishop) Black voluntarily withdraws his knight to a somewhat unattractive square.



Moreover, he is ignoring his development. Nevertheless, 4...♘b6 remains a fairly popular move. Black plans to fianchetto his king's bishop, while the most dangerous setup against g7-g6, involving ♗f1-c4, is now impossible.

Hungarian theoretician Attila Schneider named 4...♘b6 the Schmid Variation based on a game by the German Grandmaster in 1962 (against Ghitescu at the Olympiad in Varna). But Lothar Schmid also played this line in the previous decade, while its first known appearance was in Michell – E.Gruenfeld (Scarborough 1930).

5. a2-a4 ...

The addition of a2-a4 and a7-a5 in the Alekhine Defense is usually better for White. He takes the important b5 square under control while the black knight becomes more vulnerable.

5.c4 is only played occasionally via the move order considered here. However, after 4.c4 ♘b6 developing the knight to f3 is clearly the third most popular move. White doesn't want to commit to a specific opening line, instead providing that privilege to his opponent. Black's main responses, 5...♗g4, 5...g6 and 5...♘c6, are considered individually in the respective chapters.

5.♗d3 is harmless for Black, for example 5...g6 6.0-0 ♗g7 7.h3 0-0 8.♖e1 de 9.de ♘c6 10.♘c3 ♘b4 (this is the drawback of ♗f1-d3) 11.♗g5 h6 12.♗f4 ♘xd3 13.cd c6 14.♕d2 ♔h7 15.♖ad1 ♗e6 16.♖e4 (threatening 17.♗xh6!) 16...♖h8 17.♖d4 ♕c7 (Dergatchov – Konopka, Prague 2007). White's languid initiative can run out of steam at any moment, but his weakened pawns will remain.

Retreating the knight occasionally prompts White to occupy c3 straight away. After 5.♘c3 g6 6.♗f4 ♗g7 the plan to exchange the dark-squared bishops does not justify its relative popularity. White may continue 7.♕d2 ♗g4 8.♗h6 0-0 9.♗xg7 ♔xg7 10.♕f4 ♗xf3 11.♕xf3 de 12.de ♘c6 13.♖d1 ♕c8 14.♕e4 ♕e6 and Black has a fairly pleasant – and standard – position (Londyn – Konopka, Prague 2010). 7.♗b5+ ♗d7 8.a4 a6 9.a5 ab 10.ab ♖xa1 11.♕xa1 cb 12.ed 0-0!? 13.0-0 (13.de?! ♕xe7 14.♗e3 b4 15.♘d5 ♕d6 16.c4 b5) 13...ed 14.♗xd6 ♖e8 15.♖e1 ♘a6 16.♗e5 (Cao Sang – Z.Varga, Hungary 2006) 16...b4 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 18.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 19.♘d1 ♗c6 with equality is more interesting.

5. ... a7-a5

6. ♗f1-b5+ ...

White tempts the pawn to c6 (no other blocking moves work due to e5-e6), as a result of which Black's pawn chain loses its elasticity and the queen's knight ends up without a good square.

It's widely known that in reply to 6.ed taking with the c-pawn isn't a good idea due to 7.d5. In the game Hendriks – Pesotsky (Budapest 2008) Black compromised his position by attempting to shake up the kingside, although he even failed to achieve this objective: 7...e5 8.de ♗xe6 9.♗b5+ ♘c6 10.♘g5 ♗c4 11.♗xc4 ♘xc4 12.0-0 ♘4e5 13.f4 ♘g6 14.♕d5 ♕f6 15.♗e3 h6 16.♘e4 ♕e6 17.♘bc3 ♕xd5 18.♘xd5 0-0-0 19.♗b6 ♖d7 20.♖ad1. The series of intermediate attacks 13...h6 14.♘e4 d5 15.♘ec3 d4 16.♘b5 ♘g6 is relatively better.

V.Sergeev versus Tokarski (Koszalin 2008) gradually neutralized his opponent's pressure after 6...ed 7.♗d3 ♗g4 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♖e1 ♘c6 10.c3 0-0 11.♘bd2 (it was worth considering 11.b3 with the idea of switching his rook to e2 via a2) 11...♗h5 12.♘e4 ♗g6 13.♘eg5 ♗f6 14.h4 ♖e8 15.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 16.h5!? ♗xh5 17.♗xh7+ ♔f8 18.♗c2 ♗xg5 19.♗xg5 f6 20.♕d3 ♘e7 (20...fg 21.♘xg5 ♕e7 22.f4 with a threatening initiative for the piece) 21.♗f4 ♗g6 22.♕e2 ♘bd5 23.♗h2 ♗xc2 24.♕xc2 ♕h5 25.♖e1 ♖e8 26.♕b3 b6 27.♕b5 ♕f5.

Game 63 with the line 6.♘c3 is a true action thriller!

6. ... c7-c6

7. ♗b5-d3 ...

Let's also take a look at how the young Tomashevsky (Black) interpreted this opening versus Farakhov, Essentuki 2003: 7.♗e2 g6 8.h3 ♗g7 9.♗f4 de 10.♗xe5 ♗xe5 11.♘xe5 ♘8d7 12.♘f3 0-0 13. 0-0 ♘f6 (the recommendation 13... ♕c7 14.♖e1 e5 doesn't work due to 15.♘c3 ♖d8 16.♘e4 and c2-c4) 14.c4 ♕c7 15.♘c3 ♘bd7 16.♖e1 ♖e8 17.♗f1 ♘f8 18.♕b3 ♗d7. The exchange of the king's bishop did not prevent Black from launching a successful defense, but in the event of a counterattack this piece's absence will make itself felt.

Sakaev took a more academic approach versus Luther (Ohrid 2001): 7...de 8.♘xe5 g6 9.c3 ♗g7 10.♘d2 ♘8d7 11.♘xd7 ♗xd7 12.0-0 0-0 13.♘f3 ♗g4 14.h3 ♗xf3 15.♗xf3 e6 and a draw in a position that was slightly better for White. After 9.0-0 ♗g7 10.c4 0-0 11.♘c3 (11.♘f3 was more accurate) 11... ♗e6 12.b3 (Simek – Konopka, Prague 2014) the hanging white pieces on the long diagonal prompt Black to take forcing action: 12... c5! 13.♗e3 ♘c6 14.♘xc6 bc 15.dc ♘xc4 16.bc ♗xc3 17.♖c1 ♕xd1 18.♖fxd1 ♗b4. However, Konopka continued 12...♘8d7 13.♘f3 ♗g4 14.♗e3 ♕c7 15.♖c1 ♖fd8 16.h3 ♗xf3 17.♗xf3 ♘f6 18.♕e2 ♘bd7 19.♖fd1 e6?!, and now it was White

who had the opportunity to play the d4-d5 thrust.

7. ... ♗c8-g4

The Alekhine Defense in general – and the 4...♘b6 line in particular – was successfully employed by Peter Leko, albeit in his youth. His struggle with the more experienced Anka (Kecskemet 1991) was played out in a somewhat standard and boring fashion, with White applying slight pressure: 7... g6 8.0-0 ♗g7 9.ed ♕xd6 10.c3 0-0 11.♗g5 ♘8d7 12.♖e1 ♘f6 13.♘bd2 ♗g4 14.h3 ♗xf3 15.♘xf3 ♘bd5 16.♘e5 ♖fe8 17.♕b3 ♘d7 18.♘xd7 ♕xd7 19.♖ad1 ♕c7 20.♗e4, ½ - ½.

In the 4.♘f3 variation, a structure along the lines of 7...de 8.de g6 9. 0-0 ♗g7 10.h3 0-0 11.♕e2 ♗e6 12.♘g5 ♘8d7!? 13.♘xe6 fe often arises. The separated pawns are easy to defend and they control important squares, while the unemployed rook has gained a semi-open file.

White takes on e5 with the knight much more often. In the game Priborsky – Konopka (Czech Republic 2006) he was unable to find a satisfactory answer to c6-c5 (which is a typical pawn advance in these positions) followed by Black switching pieces to the kingside: 8.♘xe5 g6 9.0-0 ♗g7 10.c3 0-0 11.♖e1 ♘8d7 12.♗f4 ♘d5 13.♘xd7 ♗xd7 14.♗e5 ♕b6 15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.♕c2 c5!? 17.dc ♕xc5 18.♘d2 ♖ac8 19.♕b3 ♘f4 20.♗e4 ♖fd8 21.♖ad1 ♕g5. 12.♘f3 is preferable here, in order to later return the knight to the center at the right time (after Black's knight moves to f6). A good illustration of this technical manoeuvre can be seen in the fragment Bruzon – Janev (Spain 2002): 8...♘8d7 9.♘f3 ♘f6 10.h3 ♘bd5 11.0-0 g6 12.♖e1 ♗g7 13.c3 0-0 14.♘bd2 c5 15.♘b3 cd 16.♘bxd4 e6 (the bishop isn't going anywhere in any case) 17.♗g5 h6 18.♗d2 ♘h5 19.♗f1 ♖e8 20.♘e5. The c6-c5 thrust has not made Black's difficult position any easier.

8. h2-h3 ...

The play with an open e-file in the game Manor – P.Varga (Budapest 1994) was to White's advantage: 8.ed ed 9.0-0 ♗e7 10.♖e1 0-0 11.♕e2 ♗e6 12.h4 ♖e8?! 13.♘g5 ♗xg5 14.♗xg5 ♕d7 15.♕h5 g6, and now 16.♕h6 f5 17.♘d2 ♕f7 18.♘f3 followed by 19.♗f4 increased White's advantage. The correct continuation for Black was 12...♘8d7 13.♘g5 ♗xg5 14.♗xg5 ♘f6, avoiding weakening his position.

8. ... ♗g4xf3

In the miniature Sammalvuo – Pirttimaki (Finland 2003) Black took his eye off the e6 square: 8... ♗h5? 9.g4 ♗g6 10.♗xg6 hg 11.e6! fe 12.♘g5. Disasters like this are quite a common occurrence in the Alekhine Defense...

9. ♕d1xf3 d6xe5

10. d4xe5 e7-e6

If 10...♕d5 11.♕g3 ♘8d7 12.♗e3 ♘c5 13.♘c3 ♘xd3 14.cd

Black tears into the enemy pawns at the cost of lost tempos. In response to 14...♕d8 15.e6! f6 (Arjun – S.Farago, Budapest 2007) the manoeuvre ♖a1-a3-b3 is effective. After 14...♕b3 15.0-0 ♘d7 (15...♕xb2? 16.♖fc1 and 17.♖ab1) 16.♘e4 g6 (16...♕xd3? 17.♘g5) 17.e6! fe 18.♕c7! Black also has problems mobilizing.

11. 0-0 ♘b8-d7

12. ♕f3-g3 ...

In reply to 12.♗f4 ♘d5 13.♗g3 Laketic versus Delchev (Cannes 1999) successfully brought his queen into battle. The players then agreed a draw rather quickly: 13...♕g5!? 14.h4 ♕h6 15.♘a3 ♗e7 (this is just as good as 15...♗xa3 16.♖xa3 0-0) 16.♘c4 0-0 17.♕g4 ♘c5 18.♖fd1 ♘xd3 19.♖xd3 ♕g6 20.♕xg6 hg 21.♖b3 b5! 22.♘e3 ♘b6 23.ab a4 24.♖c3 cb 25.♖c6 ♖fb8 26.c4 bc 27.♘xc4.

In the game Lehner – Z.Varga (Austria 2003) after 12.♖e1 ♘c5 13.♗e4 the a-pawn is untouchable due to the attack on c6. The Grandmaster avoided the primitive trap and continued 13...♕c7 14.♘c3 0-0-0 15.b3 ♖d7 16.♗e3 ♗e7 17.♕g3 g5!? 18.♗f3 h6 19.♗h5 ♖f8 20.♗xc5 ♘xc5 21.♘e4 ♗e7 22.c5 ♖d4?! 23.♘d6+! ♗xd6 24.cd ♕d8 25.♕e5 ♖xd6 26.♕a5 ♘d7. ♘ow 27.♕a8+ ♘b8 28.b4 followed by further advancing the pawn left Black in a difficult position, hence he should have preferred 22...♗b4 23.♖ed1 ♖xd1+ 24.♖xd1 ♘d7 25.♘d6 ♗xd6 26.ed ♕b6 – here the pawn structure renders the black knight and white bishop equals.

12. ... ♕d8-c7

13. ♖f1-e1 ♘d7-c5

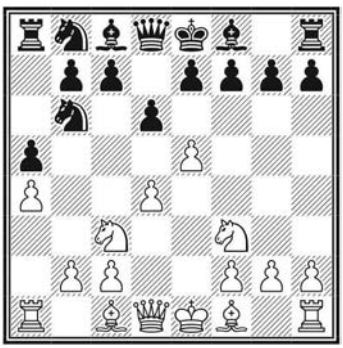


Prie and Fogarasi (Paris 1995) continued here 14.♘c3 ♘xd3 15.♕xd3 ♘d5 16.♘xd5 cd 17.♕b5+ ♕d7 18.♗d2 ♕xb5 19.ab a4 20.♖a2. After 20...a3 21.ba ♖a4 Black should achieve a draw, but after 15...♗b4 16.♕g3 0-0 his prospects are better.

14.♗f1!? is interesting, as any excess greed by Black won't go unpunished: 14...♘bxa4 15.♗e3 g6 16.♘d2 (with sufficient compensation) 16...♘xb2? 17.♗xc5 ♗xc5 18.♘e4. Janev versus Cappon (Cappelle-la-Grande 2013) declined to accept the sacrifice and gradually found himself in an unenviable position – 14...f5 15.♘c3 ♕f7 16.♗e3 ♕g6 17.♕f4 ♗e7 18.b4 ab 19.♕xb4 ♘bd7 20.♖ad1 ♔f7 21.♖d6!? ♗xd6 22.ed b6 23.♗xc5 bc 24.♕b7 ♖ad8 25.♗c4 ♖he8 26.♕xc6.

Game 63
P.Simacek – M.Konopka
Decin 2009

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**♘d5-b6**
5.	**a2-a4**	**a7-a5**
6.	**♘b1-c3**	**...**



6. ... c7-c6

Michal Konopka, a firm devotee of 4...♘b6, was not satisfied with the game commented here and a month later against Sandhoefner (Austria 2009) preferred 6...de 7.♘xe5 ♘8d7 8.♕f3!? ♘f6?! After 9.♗b5+ c6 10.♘xc6! bc 11.♗xc6+ ♗d7 12.♗xa8 ♕xa8 13.♕xa8 ♘xa8 White gained a rook and a pair of pawns for two minor pieces and chances of winning. In any case, after 8...♘xe5 9.de c6 10.♗e3 ♗e6 11.♕g3 ♘d7 12.0-0-0 it's not easy for Black to defend either.

In the main line with 6...g6 7.ed Konopka has also varied his play. The continuation 7...cd 8.♗b5+ ♗d7 9.h4 h5 10.♗g5 ♗g7 11.♕e2 ♘c6 12.0-0-0 f6 13.♗f4 d5 14.♗d6! ♔f7 15.♗c5 e6 16.♖hg1 ♘c8 17.g4 (Jansa – Konopka, Czech Republic 1996) is not attractive for Black and so he should take with the e-pawn. The duel Vymazal – Konopka (Czech Republic 2008) also turned out to White's advantage after 7... ed 8.♗g5 f6 9.♗e3 d5 10.h4 ♗g7?! 11.h5 ♔f7 12.b3 ♘c6 13.♕d2 ♕e7 14.♗e2 ♘b4 15.♔f1 ♖e8 16.♖e1 ♗f5 17.♗d1, but instead of occupying the middle of nowhere at g7 the bishop should have gone to b4 with the simple threat 11... ♗xc3+ 12.bc ♗d7.

In the game Bach – Konopka (Timisoara 1994) White exchanged the dark-squared bishops at the cost of a concession in the center: 6... g6 7.♗f4 ♗g7 8.♕d2 0-0 9.♗h6 de 10.♗xg7 ♔xg7 11.♘xe5 f6 12.♘f3 ♘c6 13.h4 ♗g4 14.h5 ♗xf3 15.hg h5 16.gf ♕xd4 17.♕xd4 ♘xd4 18.0-0-0 e5 – the centralized knight will give Black an insignificant advantage in the endgame. 9... ♗g4 10.♗xg7 ♔xg7 11.♗e2 ♗xf3 12.♗xf3 de 13.♗xb7 ♖a7 14.♗f3 c6 (defending against ♘c3-b5) 15.de ♕xd2+ 16.♔xd2 ♘c4+ 17.♔c1 ♘xe5 18.♗e2 ♖d8 or 18... f5 with equality is another good continuation.

In reply to g7-g6 it is logical to play 7.h4 immediately, but actually this pawn move is quite rare and so it's evaluation remains to be determined. Bobras checkmated

the very same Konopka (Oberhof 1997) after 7...♗g4 8.h5 de?! (the correct defense 8...gh has yet to be tested in practice) 9.hg fg 10.♗d3 ♗g7 11.♗h6 ♗xh6 12.♖xh6 0-0 13.♗xg6! ♗xf3 (13...♔g7 14.♖xh7+! ♔xg6 15.♘xe5+ ♔xh7 16.♕xg4, Bobras) 14.♗xh7+ ♔g7 15.♕d3 e4 16.♕e3 ♖f6 17.♕g5+ ♔f7 18.♗g6+ ♔e6 19.♕e5+ ♔d7 20.♗f5+. Michal was also star-crossed in his game against Haba (Czech Republic 2007): 7...de 8.♗e3!? ♗g4 9.h5 ♗g7?! 10.h6 ♗f6 11.de ♕xd1+ 12.♘xd1 ♗xf3 13.ef ♗c6 14.fe ♔xe7 15.♘c3 ♘8d7 16.0-0-0 ♖hd8 17.b3 ♘f8! 18.♗c5+ ♔f6 19.♖e1 ♘e6 20.♗a3 – in this difficult position Black failed to use the chance for a draw provided by his opponent. Once again, Black's strongest line was g6xh5 (instead of 9...♗g7?!).

7. ♗f1-d3 ...

Konopka often plays his favorite manoeuvre without due care and attention. In a game with Hracek (Ostrava 2010) he copied his actions from the game with Sandhoefner: 7.♗f4 de 8.♘xe5 ♘8d7 9.♕f3 ♘f6?? (9...♘xe5 10.de ♗e6 would have been fine) 10.d5!! ♘bxd5 11.♘xd5 ♕xd5 12.♗c4 ♕xf3 13.♗xf7+ ♔d8 14.gf – and the result is no longer in doubt.

7. ... ♗c8-g4
8. h2-h3 ♗g4xf3
9. ♕d1xf3 d6xe5
10. d4xe5 e7-e6

Black is fine here. He can meet 11.♕g3 with the amusing line 11... h5!? 12.♗g5 ♕d4 13.0-0-0 h4 14.♗e2!? (hinting at checkmate) 14...hg 15.♖xd4 ♘8d7 16.fg ♘xe5, and it's hard to say which side is better.

11. 0-0 ♘b8-d7
12. ♗c1-f4 ♘d7-c5
13. ♖f1-d1 ♕d8-c7
14. ♘c3-b5!? ...

This suddenly livens up what were indolent events (if 14.♗e2 Black probably planned h7-h6, ♗f8-e7 and g7-g5). Simacek counts on his advantage in development and the enemy king's lack of safety.

14. ... c6xb5
15. ♗d3xb5+ ♘c5-d7

After 15...♘bd7 16.♗e3 0-0-0 17.♕xf7 ♘e5 18.♖xd8+ ♕xd8 19.♕h5 ♕c7 White would not have had time to bring his rook into battle and would best repeat moves.

16. ♗f4-e3 0-0-0
17. ♕f3xf7 ♗f8-c5
18. ♗e3-g5 ♖d8-f8

It was worth considering a reciprocal exchange sac. If 18... ♕xe5!? 19.♗xd8 ♖xd8 20.♖e1 ♕xb2 21.♖ad1 (21.♕xe6 ♕f6 22.♕e2 ♖f8 with unpleasant pressure on f2) 21...♕xc2 22.♖c1 ♕f5 23.♕xf5 ef 24.♖e7 ♔b8 25.♖xg7 then Black, despite his lost pawns, rearranges his pieces with ♗c5-d4 and ♘d7-c5, crashing down on a4. His chances are probably better.

19. ♕f7xe6 ♗c5xf2+

After 19...♖xf2 20.♔h1 White

has a threat that is difficult to spot in 21.b4! ab 22.a5, so Black probably has to accept the difficult continuation 20...♕xe5 21.♗xd7+ ♘xd7 22.♕xd7+ ♔b8 23.♖d5 ♕e4 24.♖g1 ♗b6.

20. ♔g1-h1 ♖f8-e8
21. ♕e6-g4?! ...

It seems that 21.♕d6 ♕xd6 22.ed ♖e6 23.♗d2!? ♖xd6 24.♗xa5 ♖xd1+ 25.♖xd1 would leave Black without hopes of winning, but White cannot win either!

21. ... h7-h5
22. ♕g4-f3 ♖e8-f8
23. ♕f3-b3?! ...

After 23.♗xd7+ ♘xd7 24.♗f4 g5 25.e6 ♕xf4 26.ed+ ♔b8 27.♕e2 White can put up some sort of struggle, whereas now 23...♘c5 24.♕c3 ♖f5 is somewhat akin to the Titanic's meeting with its ice-berg. But Black was too hasty in liquidating the pawn and the struggle is once again on an even kilter.

23. ... ♕c7xe5?!
24. ♗b5xd7+ ♘b6xd7



25. ♖d1xd7! ♔c8xd7
26. ♕b3xb7+ ♔d7-e6

Konopka believes that given the extra rook the king is perfectly entitled to get some fresh air in the center. The variation 26...♔e8 27.♖d1 ♗d4 28.♗d2 ♕e2 29.♕c6+ ♔e7 30.♗g5+ ♔f7 31.♖xd4 ♕e1+ 32.♔h2 ♕e5+ 33.♖f4+ ♔g8 34.♕c4+ ♔h7 35.♕d3+ ♔g8 36.♕c4+ leads to a draw.

27. ♖a1-d1 ♗f2-d4
28. h3-h4 ♖f8-b8?

He should have taken control of the seventh rank with 28...♖f7. In that case the queen would have been forced to deliver perpetual check along the light squares.

29. ♕b7-e7+ ♔e6-d5
30. ♕e7-d7+ ♔d5-c5
31. c2-c3?! ...

After 31.♖xd4! ♕xd4 32.♗e7+ White wins the queen. Nothing is changed after 31...♕e1+ 32.♔h2 ♕e5+ 33.♔h3, and the king escapes further checks on the h3 square.

31. ... ♔c5-b6
32. c3xd4 ♕e5-c7
33. ♕d7-e6+ ...

Simacek correctly judged that 33.♕xc7+ ♔xc7 34.♗f4+ ♔d7 35.♗xb8 ♖xb8 leads to a rook ending close to a draw, but he failed to spot the more promising 33.♕h3! ♔a7 34.♖c1 ♕d6 35.♕f5.

33. ... ♔b8-a7?!

Compared with 26...♔e6 the king has opted for the opposite extreme and retreats too quickly. If 33...♕c6 34.d5 ♕xe6 35.de ♔c5

Black should be able to draw; now, however, 34.♖c1! ♕b7 35.♖c5 ♕b4 36.♕e5 would lead to a White win.

34. d4-d5?! ♖h8-e8

35. ♕e6-g6 ...

White is gradually heading into a draw. He should have played 35.♗e3+ ♔b7 36.♕h3 ♖bd8 37.♕f3.

35. ... ♖e8-e2

36. ♕g6-d3 ...

If 36.d6 ♕c6 37.♕f7+ ♖b7 38.♕d5 ♕xd5 39.♖xd5 ♖d7 40.♗e7 White does not have much left of what used to be a fantastic position, although Black still needs to tread carefully.

36. ... ♖b8xb2

37. ♖d1-c1 ♕c7-e5

38. d5-d6 ♖e2xg2

39. ♕d3-e3+ ♕e5xe3

40. ♗g5xe3+ ♔a7-b7

41. d6-d7 ♖g2-d2

42. ♗e3xd2 ♖b2xd2

43. ♖c1-c5

½ - ½

The variation 4...♘b6 is acceptable for Black – most of these minor lines lead to typical positions where White has a marginal advantage. It's easiest for White to gain a small advantage with 5.a4 a5 6.♗b5+ c6 7.♗d3.

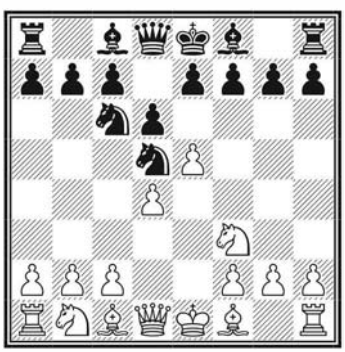
Chapter 60. 4...♘c6

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6

2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5

3. d2-d4 d7-d6

4. ♘g1-f3 ♘b8-c6



The typical 'scales' of the Alekhine Defense: one side contains the attack on White's central pawns, while the other contains White's tempo advance with d4-d5. Which side will prove to be the heaviest?

5. c2-c4 ...

White heads for a tactical line, significantly livening up 4.♘f3, which is usually a somewhat plain-vanilla system. None of White's possible bishop moves gives him any advantage. With 5.♗e2 the knight on c6 is excellently placed. In the line 5...de 6.de ♗f5 7.c3 e6 8.0-0 e6 9.♕b3 ♘b6 10.♗e3 h6 Black's prophylactic moves are justified by the nuance 11.♖d1 ♘a5! 12.♖xd8+ ♖xd8, winning back the queen with a better position. Or 6.♘xe5

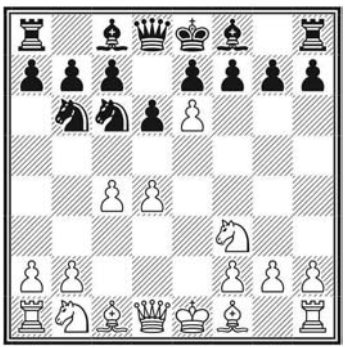
♘xe5 7.de ♗f5 8.0-0 e6 9.♗f3 c6 10.♕e2 ♗e7 11.♖d1 ♕c7 12.c4 ♘b4 13.♘c3 0-0 14.♗f4 ♖ad8 15.♘e4 ♗xe4 16.♗xe4 a5 17.a3 ♘a6 18.♗c2 ♘c5 19.b4 ab 20.ab ♘a6 21.♕e4 g6 22.c5 ♖d5 23.♗b3 ♖xd1+ 24.♖xd1 ♕c8 25.h4 ♘c7 26.h5 ♘d5 (E.Geller – Korneev, Elista 1995) – the knight has finally got to an ideal central outpost and Black has nothing to worry about.

After 5.♗c4 ♘b6 the sacrifice on f7 has been tested several times. White's strong pawn chain, which paralyzes Black's queenside, may compensate for the piece. However, if Black plays accurately then White's plan will be scuppered – 6.♗xf7+?! ♔xf7 7.e6+ ♔g8 8.d5 ♘e5 9.♘xe5 de 10.♕f3 ♕e8 11.♗e3 c6 12.♗xb6 ab 13.c4 b5. Najer against Nguyen Ngoc Truong Son (Moscow 2007) gained modest success after 6.♗b5+ ♗d7 7.a4 e6 8.c3 de 9.de ♘a5 10.♘bd2 a6 11.♗d3 c5 12.b3 c4!? (12...♗c6 13.♗c2 ♕c7 was simpler) 13.bc ♕c7 14.0-0 h6 15.c5 ♗xc5 16.♘e4 ♗e7. This strong Grandmaster in a serious tournament went for quite a low-key setup.

5.♗b5 a6 6.♗xc6+ bc still remains to be tested. The defects in his pawn structure force Black to hurry with counterplay: 7.0-0 e6 8.♘bd2 ♗e7 9.♘c4 a5 10.♖e1 a4 11.♗d2 ♗d7 12.♕c1 0-0 13.♘g5 ♕b8 14.♘e4 f5 15.♘g5 ♗xg5 16.♗xg5 f4 17.f3 c5 (Shamkovich – Larsen, Moscow 1962) or 7.c4 ♘b6 8.b3 ♗f5 9.0-0 e6 10.♗b2 ♗e7 11.♕c2 0-0 12.♘bd2 (12.♘c3!?) 12...a5 13.a4 ♘d7 14.♖fd1 ♖e8 15.♖ac1 ♕b8 16.h3 de 17.♘xe5 ♘xe5 18.♕xe5 c5! (Slobodjan – Z.Varga, Hungary 1994). Moving the queen to b8 to work along the semi-open file is also worthy of consideration.

5. ... ♘d5-b6

6. e5-e6! ...



This is the downside to placing the knight on c6! The bishop cannot capture on e6 and Black will have to play with his pawn structure split in two. Black's kingside and queenside see their coordination reduced in this case, while matters start to get uncomfortable for the black king.

6. ... f7xe6

7. ♘b1-c3 ...

This flexible move became the main line at the very end of the last century. Without pieces on the queenside White's attack is unlikely to succeed at the end of the day, while it's useful to be able to choose the way to attack depending on Black's next move.

The drawback of 7.♗e3!? (with a similar idea of 'giving Black the move') is that b2 ends up undefended. However, the recent game Khalifman – Nosenko (Voronezh 2014) highlights the advantage of this bishop move – strengthening control over the important d4 square. After this followed 7...g6 8.h4 ♗g7 9.h5 e5 10.d5 (10.hg hg 11.♖xh8+ ♗xh8 12.d5 e4!) 10...♘d4 11.♘xd4 ed 12.♗xd4 e5 13.♗e3 ♕e7 14.♘c3 ♗f5 15.g4 ♗d7 16.♘e4 and White's pieces were clearly better placed. The principled continuation is 10... e4!? (and if 11.dc ef 12.♗d4 0-0 13.♗xg7 ♔xg7 14.hg hg 15.♕c1 ♖h8 16.♕c3+ e5 17.♖xh8 ♕xh8 then Black is safe) 11.♘g5!, and if 11...♗xb2 12.♘d2 ♗xa1 13.♕xa1 ♘e5 (Lau – Fleck, Germany 1986) 14.hg ♗f5 15.gh White has powerful compensation for the exchange. Given that after 11...♘e5 12.♘e4 ♗f5 13.♘bc3 Black doesn't have an enviable position either the rare continuation 7.♗e3 so far appears good for White.

But we can't really agree with Houdini, who suggests meeting 7.h4 with 7...g6 8.h5 ♗g7 (and 9.♘c3 then leads to the main line). If Black plays in the center, then the rook's pawn advance becomes difficult to justify. Black could continue 7...e5 8.d5 ♘d4 9.♘xd4 ed 10.♕xd4 e5 11.de ♗xe6 12.♗e2 h6 (and then castle long) or 11.♕d1 ♗f5 12.♘c3 ♗e7 13.♗e3 0-0 14.g3 c5!?. Bagirov's suggestion 10...♕d7 looks weaker in our view. The sharp variation 11.♗e2 e5 12.de ♕xe6 13.♘c3 c5 14.♕d3 ♗e7 15.♘b5 0-0 16.♘c7 ♕f7 17.♘xa8 ♕xf2+ 18.♔d1 ♕xg2 19.♖f1 ♖xf1+ 20.♗xf1 ♗g4+ 21.♗e2 ♘xa8 is fairly promising for Black, but after 16.♗g5 he doesn't have any compensation for the pawn.

The continuation 7.♗d3 isn't entirely clear. Obviously one should not play in the style of Bogoljubow: 7...♘b4 8.♘g5 ♘xd3+ 9.♕xd3 ♕d7 10.♘xh7 ♕c6 11.♕g6+ ♔d7 12.b3 ♖xh7 13.♕xh7 ♕xg4 14.♖f1 c6 15.♗e3 ♔c7 16.♘d2 ♕g4 17.♕e4 (a novelty) 17...♕h5 18.♖g1 ♘d7 19.♗f4 ♘f6 20.♕f3 c5 21.dc ♕xc5 22.♗e3 ♕e5 23.♖c1 (R.Rodriguez – Mellado Trivino, Spain 1993) – White is the exchange for a pawn up, while Black has the 'advantage' of a pair of useless, stupid bishops. 7...e5 8.d5 ♘b4 9.♗e4 is also good for White. After 9...♗g4 10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♕xf3 g6 12.h4 ♕d7? (after 12...c6 13.h5 cd 14.cd gh 15.♕xh5+ ♔d7 White has nothing decisive given his backwardness in development) 13.h5 ♖g8 14.hg hg 15.a3 ♘a6 16.♖h7 0-0-0 17.♕f7 ♕g4 18.♗f3 ♕xc4 19.♘d2 and in the game Frolov – Kravtsov (Tomsk 1997) Black found himself without a rook. Maybe it's better to adopt the irrational continuation 7...g6 8.h4 e5 9.h5 ♗f5!? 10.hg ♕d7 11.♖xh7 ♖g8, which has yet to be tested in practice.

For 7.♘g5 please refer to Game 64.

7. ... g7-g6

This fianchetto, with the idea of pressurizing White's central pawn, is played in more than half of games. First, though, let's test the relocation of our favorite knight: 7...♘d7 8.♘g5 ♘f6 9.d5 ed 10.cd h6 (the retreats bring no joy at all) 11.dc hg 12.cb ♗xb7 13.♗xg5 ♕c8 14.♕b3 – the dark-squared bishop remains closed out while the king is poorly placed as well.

The line 7...e5 8.d5 ♘d4 9.♘xd4 ed 10.♕xd4 e5 is relatively quiet. Black has returned the pawn, and in doing so has freed up his position and should be able to complete his development unhindered. ♘egi versus Akshat (New Delhi 2007) put his faith in the e4 square: 11.♕d1 ♗f5 12.♗d3 ♕d7 13.♗e3 ♗e7 14.0-0 0-0 15.♗xf5 ♗xf5 16.♕d3 ♖af8 17.a4. Now, instead of 17... ♗g5 18.♗xb6 ab 19.♘e4 with the continuation a4-a5, retreating 17...♘c8 leaves White without an obvious target to attack and is hence relatively safe.

After 11.de ♗xe6 12.♗e2 Black gains equal chances: 12... ♕f6 13.♕xf6 gf 14.b3 d5 15.cd ♗b4 16.♗d2 ♘xd5 17.♗h5+ ♔f8 18.♘xd5 ♗xd2+ 19.♔xd2 ♗xd5 20.♖hc1 c6 21.g3 ♖d8 22.♘c3 ♖g8 23.h4 ♖g7 24.♖d1 ♖e7 25.♗f3 ♖e5 26.♖d2 ♔e7, ½ - ½ (Delchev – Rogulj, Lugano 2001). If 12.♗e3 then Black's standard central push is much harder to execute and brings less obvious benefits: 12... ♕f6 13.♕xf6 gf 14.b3 0-0-0 15.0-0-0 c6 16.♗d3 d5 (Filev – Orev, Sofia 2009) 17.♗xb6 ab 18.cd cd 19.♖he1 ♗f7 – Black now faces a long and boring defense of his chronic weakness on d5. In the game 12... ♕e7 13.♗e2 c5 14.♕f4 0-0-0 15. 0-0 ♖g8 16.♖fe1 g5 17.♕g3 ♕f7 (Filev – Orev, Sofia 2008) White missed the strong tactic 18.♘b5! a6 19.♗xc5! dc 20.♘a7+ ♔d7 21.♖ad1 ♔e8 22.♖xd8+ ♔xd8 23.♕b8+ ♔e7 24.♗g4. So it wasn't for the fun of it that Orev opted to swap queens.

8. h2-h4 ...

The somewhat slow 8.♗e3 adds protection to d4, after which White appears to have an extra safety cushion. After 8...♗g7 9.h4 0-0 10.h5 e5 (if 10...gh, then 11.♗d3! with the idea of a typical sac on h7) 11.d5 ♘d4 12.♘xd4 ed 13.♗xd4 ♗xd4 14.♕xd4 e5 15.de ♕f6 White's attack peters out and Black is firmly on the path to equality. For example, 16.0-0-0 ♗xe6 17.hg hg 18.f3 ♔g7 19.♘b5 ♗g8 20.b3 ♕xd4 21.♖xd4 d5 22.cd ♘xd5 23.♗c4 c6 24.♗xd5 ♗xd5 25.♘c7 ♖ac8 26.♘xd5 cd+ 27.♔d2 ♖c5, and Narciso Dublan had to make a real effort to defend the rook endgame against Kobalia (Rijeka 2010). However, if 11.hg! ed 12.gh+ ♔h8 13.♘xd4 ♘xe5 White is not forced to follow the analysis of Golubev (14.♗h6? ♗xh6 15.♖xh6

♖xf2! 16.♔xf2 ♕f8+), and instead can gain an advantage with 14.♕b3 c5 15.♘db5 ♗f5 16.0-0-0. 11...hg 12.d5 ♘d4 13.♘xd4 ed 14.♗xd4 ♗xd4 15.♕xd4 e5 16.♕d3 ♔g7 17.♕e3 ♖h8 18.♖xh8 ♕xh8 19.c5 ♘d7 20.cd cd 21.♘e4 is no good either for Black (Dervishi – Dive, Istanbul 2012). Instead, he should switch the move order: 9...e5 10.d5 ♘d4 11.♘xd4 ed 12.♗xd4 ♗xd4 13.♕xd4 e5 14.de 0-0 15.h5 ♕f6 then play like in the game Kobalia against Narciso Dublan.

After 9...d5!? 10.c5 ♘c4? 11. ♗xc4 dc 12.♕a4 ♕d7 13.0-0-0 b5 14.♕xb5 ♖b8 15.♕xc4 ♘b4 16.♘e5 ♗xe5 17.de ♗a6 18.♖xd7 ♗xc4 19.♖hd1 Nunn gained a decisive advantage against Vaganian (London 1986) and he himself proposed a better line for Black – 10...♘d7 11.h5 e5 12.h6 ♗f6 13.♘xd5 ed 14.♘xf6+ ef 15.♘xd4 ♘de5 with approximate equality. The blocking move d6-d5, which is unusual in these lines, in this case supports the standard attempt to break out with e7-e5.

8. ... ♗f8-g7
9. h4-h5 e7-e5
10. d4-d5 ♘c6-d4
11. h5xg6 ...

If 11.♘xd4 ed 12.♘e4 Black has time to build strong walls: 12...♗f5 13.♘g5 ♕d7 14.hg hg 15.♖xh8+ ♗xh8 16.f3 ♕a4 17.b3 ♕b4+ 18.♗d2 ♕a3 19.g4 ♗d7 20.♗d3 0-0-0 with approximate equality (Djukic – Neubauer, Oberwart 1995). 11.♗d3 c6 12.♘g5 ♗f5 13.♗xf5 gf 14.♘e2 ♘xc4 15.0-0 ♕b6 16.b3 e4 17.♘g3 h6 18.bc hg 19.♗xg5 ♗e5 20.♖b1 ♕c5 is too passive (Nevednichy – Chigladze, Albena 2013) 21.h6 0-0-0 (White threatened 22.♕h5+ ♔d8 23.♖xb7) 22.♗e3 ♕xc4 23. ♗xd4 ♕xd4 24.♕b3 ♕b6 25.♕c2 ♕c7 26.♘xf5 with extremely complex play.

11. ... h7xg6

Developing the bishop is probably not a good idea. If 11...♗f5?! 12.♘xd4 ed 13.♖xh7! ♖xh7 14.gh ♔d7 then the most convincing continuation is 15.♕h5 ♕f8 16.♘e2 c6 17.♘f4. The pin with 11...♗g4 is clearly better, however, the variation 12.♖xh7 ♖xh7 13.gh ♕d7 14.♗e3 0-0-0 15.♘e4 is still better for White. His passed pawn ties Black up, but Black cannot remove it from play painlessly.

12. ♖h1xh8+ ♗g7xh8
13. ♗f1-d3 ...

To evaluate the position after prefacing this move with the exchange of knights, the game Filev – Regez (Ohrid 2009) is important: 13.♘xd4 ed 14.♗d3 c6 15.♘a4 ♔d7 16.♗d2 e6 17.dc bc 18.♗a5 ♖b8 19.c5 ♕g5 20.♗xb6 ab 21.♘xb6+ ♔c7 22.cd+ ♔xd6 (23...♔xb6 forces perpetual check from the squares b3 and a3) 23.♘xc8+ ♖xc8 24.♕f3 ♔b8 25.b3 ♗g7. The centralized king is safe and chances are equal. The endgame after 17.♘xb6 ab 18.♕g4

♕f6 19.♕xg6 ♕xg6 20.♗xg6 ♔d7 would probably end in a draw.

13. ... c7-c6



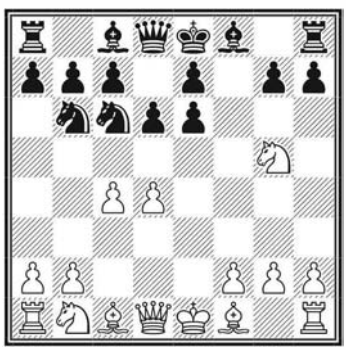
He needs to free up a path for his king. After 14.♗e3 ♔d7 15.♘xd4 ed 16.♗xd4 ♔c7 17.♗e2 c5 18.♗xh8 ♕xh8 19.♕d2 ♕h4 20.b3 ♗d7 21.g3 ♕h1+ 22.♗f1 ♖f8 23.0-0-0 ♕f3 (V.Belov – Sek, Ulan-Ude 2009) the black king is even better protected than White's, and following a long struggle the Grandmaster suffered a sensational defeat. It would be better for White to go for the pawn exchange, although after the continuation 17.dc bc 18.♗e2 ♗e6 19.b3 ♘d7 he doesn't have serious chances of gaining an advantage.

Khalifman's variation 14.dc bc 15.c5 dc 16.♗xg6+ ♔d7 17.♘e4 ♕g8(?!) 18.♘xc5+ ♔c7 19.♕d3 carries some real threats against the black king, but Black's queen deserved a better square. For example, 17...♔c7 18.♘xc5 ♕d6 19.♘xd4 ♕xg6 20.♘e2 ♕xg2 21.♘g3 a5 with good prospects.

Game 64
E.Vorobiov – G.Shilovskij
Moscow 1996

These Moscow students (Evgeny Vorobiov became a Grandmaster soon after) found themselves stuck in the opening. They reproduced the analysis of Dutch theoretician van der Tak, which is discussed in Bagirov's monograph. It is interesting to see the extent to which games in the new century and the analysis of modern computers concur with the conclusions of this recognized Alekhine Defense expert.

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**♘b8-c6**
5.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
6.	**e5-e6**	**f7xe6**
7.	**♘f3-g5**	**...**



The knight gets up close to the enemy king. The value of each move increases sharply.

7. ... e6-e5

If Black plays 7...g6 then advancing the d-pawn doesn't give White anything. He only gains the advantage by accident in the line 8.d5 ed 9.cd ♘b4 10.♘c3 ♗f5 11.♗b5+ c6 12.0-0 cb? 13.♕d4, but his problems after 12...♗g7 13.dc bc 14.♕b3 cb 15.♕xb4 ♕d7 16.♕xb5 ♗xc3 17.♕xd7+ ♔xd7 18.bc would be fully logical.

If 8.♗d3 ♗g7 9.♘xh7 ♗xd4 10.♗e4 ♗c5 (10...♗g7? 11.c5!) 11.♘g5 ♖g8 12.♕c2 then Black is in trouble. Instead, he should entrust the knight with taking the central pawn: 8...♘xd4 9.♘xh7 ♘f5 10.♘xf8 ♔xf8 – here the king is somewhat safer.

8. ♗f1-d3 ...

After 8.d5 ♘d4 9.♗d3 g6 10.♘xh7 ♗f5 11.♘xf8 ♖xf8 12.♗e3 e6 13.♗xd4 ed 14.♗xf5 ♖xf5 15.0-0 e5 16.♕g4 ♕f6 17.♘d2 ♖f4 18.♕g3 0-0-0 (Andrijevic – Milenkovic, Belgrade 2012) it's not clear that the white king is safer than Black's. If 14.de ♕f6 15.0-0 Black isn't so strong in the center, but he is still fine overall. So the conclusion seems to be that White should not delay his kingside attack.

8. ... ♘c6xd4

8...g6 has been binned by theory, yet, while appearing to dangle over a cliff, Black seems to be able to hang on. For example, 9.♘xh7 ♗f5! 10.♗xf5 gf 11.♕h5+ ♔d7 12.de ♘d4 13.♘a3 ♗g7 14.♗e3 ♗xe5 15.♗xd4 ♗xd4 16.0-0-0 ♗g7 17.c5 ♘a4 – and the safety of White's own king is in doubt.

9. ♗d3xh7 ...

If 9.♘xh7 ♗e6 10.♕h5+ ♔d7 11.♘f6+ ef 12.♕xh8 f5 then it's clear that White has not made full use of Black's knight sortie. The continuation 9.♕h5+ g6 10.♗xg6+ hg 11.♕xg6+ ♔d7 12.♘f7 ♕e8 13.♘xh8 ♕xg6 14.♘xg6 ♘c2+ 15.♔d1 ♘xc4 16.♘xf8+ ♔e8 17.♗h6 ♘xc4 18.♘a3 ♘xa3 19.ba ♗f5 leads to similar conclusions.

9. ... ♖h8xh7

10. ♘g5xh7 ♗c8-f5

11. ♘b1-a3 ♘b6xc4!

Otherwise Black won't have any compensation for the exchange. The computer now helps us to update the old analysis. After 12.♕a4+ b5!? 13.♘xb5 ♗d7 14.♕xc4 ♗b5 15.♕c3 ♕c8 16.♗e3 ♕g4 17.♔d2 it predicts a draw by repetition, instead suggesting that Black can try for an advantage with 12...♕d7 13.♕xa4 ♗xh7 14.♗e3 ♕g4 15.♗xd4 ♕xg2 16.0-0-0 ed.

12. ♘a3xc4 ♘d4-c2+

13. ♔e1-f1 ♘c2xa1

14. ♘h7xf8 ♔e8xf8

15. ♘c4-e3 ...

15.♕f3 is not a good move here. After 15...♕d7 16.♘e3 g6 17.g4?! ♕c6! 18.♕xc6 Black can get a clear advantage with the intermediate check ♗f5-d3.

15. ... ♕d8-d7

16. ♗c1-d2 ...



16. ... ♗f5-d3+?!

Amateur chess players Purnoch and Kopal (Czech Republic 2001) made exemplary moves here and in the following few moves: 16...♘c2+! 17.♘xc2 ♕b5+ 18.♔g1 ♕xb2 19.♘e3 ♕b1 20.♗c1 ♗e6 21.a3 a5! 22.h4 ♖a6 23.♔h2 ♖c6 with a very complicated game. Unfortunately, the players were unable to maintain this strong play to the end of what was a long game.

17. ♔f1-g1 d6-d5
18. ♕d1xa1 d5-d4
19. ♘e3-f1 e5-e4

Van der Tak sees this position as double-edged. In reality, however, Black lacks active play while White has gained time to consolidate his forces. Firstly, White needs to extract his queen from a1, and he needs to use his rook dozing in the other corner to support a pawn storm.

20. h2-h4 ♔f8-g8
21. h4-h5 ♖a8-f8
22. ♘f1-g3 ♕d7-g4

The queen will soon be chased away, and so Black should have transferred it via e6 to f7 straight away.

23. ♕a1-e1 ♔g8-h7?

After this the rook's pawn becomes a passed pawn and Black can give up. After 23...♖f6, 23...♖f7 or 23...c5 Vorobiov still has tons of work to do.

24. h5-h6 g7-g6
25. f2-f3 ♕g4-e6
26. ♘g3xe4 ...

This makes victory take a little longer; 26.♖h4! would have been decisive immediately.

26. ... ♗d3xe4
27. ♕e1xe4 ♕e6xe4
28. f3xe4 ♖f8-f7
29. ♖h1-h3 ♖f6-e6
30. ♖h3-f3 ♖e8xe4

If 30...♔g8 31.♖f4 c5 32.♔f2 ♖b6 33.♗c1 ♖e6 34.g4 then with the rooks on board White wins slowly but surely. The advance of the black pawns only leads to their blockade and death.

31. ♖f3-f7+ ♔h7-h8
32. ♖f7-f4 ♖e4xf4
33. ♗d2xf4 c7-c5
34. ♔g1-f2 ♔h8-h7
35. ♔f2-f3 b7-b5
36. ♔f3-e4 e7-e6
37. g2-g4 a7-a5
38. g4-g5 a5-a4
39. ♗f4-d6
1-0

Even with the most currently popular continuation in the gambit line 7.♘c3 g6 8.h4 the analyzed

lines show that Black should be fine. However, White's initiative appears so dangerous that it only takes one good move to tear Black apart and, maybe, it is worth Black making the effort to fight for equality with 7... e5. And Black also needs to find a counter to 7.♗e3!?

Part 13 4.♘f3 de

Introduction

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 d6xe5

According to Larsen, this move has been criticized by theory on the basis that it helps the white knight to occupy a good square. Yet, as Larsen points out, the move looks acceptable – its idea is to win back the tempo by threatening to exchange the knight on e5. Indeed, the Danish Grandmaster succeeded in raising this long-forgotten pawn exchange from the dead, although he didn't seem to favor any particular formation in his own games.

5. ♘f3xe5 ...



Taking with the pawn is much rarer – this is covered in Game 65. ♘ow, a number of responses are possible: 5...♘d7 is the subject of Chapter 61, while 5...g6 is analyzed in Chapters 62-64, and 5...c6 in Chapters 65-69.

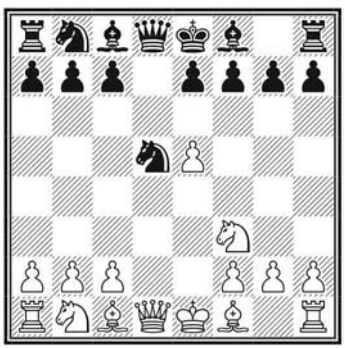
It's surprising that Larsen tried the ugly looking 5...e6, all the more so in his candidates match against Tal (Bled 1965)! After 6.♕f3 ♕f6 7.♕g3 h6 8.♘c3 ♘b4 9.♗b5+ c6 10.♗a4 ♘d7 11.0-0 ♘xe5 12.de ♕g6 13.♕f3 ♕f5 14.♕e2 ♗e7 15.a3 ♘d5 this famous son of Riga opted for a piece sacrifice, even though it doesn't promise anything more than equality after 16.♘b5!? cb 17.♕xb5+ ♔d8 18.c4 ♘b6 (so Black failed to equalize) 19.♕a5 ♔c7 20.c5 ♔b8 21.cb ab 22.♕b5 ♗e4 23.♗d1 ♗c5 24.♗f3 ♕xe5 25.♕d3. It's better for White to play 15.f4!? here (Bagirov) to prepare to centralize his knight or to send his knight to the center a bit earlier – 11.♘e4 ♕f5 12.f3 ♘xe5 13.de (Tal).

White may exploit Black's voluntary blocking of his own

bishop by a number of means. If for example 6.c4 ♗b4+ 7.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 8.♕xd2 ♘f6 9.♘c3 b6 10.♕e3 ♗b7 11.♗e2 0-0 12.0-0 ♘bd7 13.f4 Black gets to develop his bishop but his opponent has already strengthened his knight in the center and has easy and clearly better play.

Game 65
J.Jackova – R.Palliser
England 2004

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**d6xe5**
5.	**d4xe5**	**...**



White tries to gain a spatial advantage, relying on the strength of the advanced pawn. But in practice this strength often turns out to be a weakness.

5. ... ♗c8-g4

By pinning and then taking the knight Black weakens White's support for his e-pawn. Therefore, this continuation is by far the most popular. If instead Black continues 5...♗f5 then White can consider 6.♘d4 ♗g6 7.e6!? Black's best continuation after this is probably 7...♘b4!? 8.c3 ♘8c6 9.ef+ ♗xf7 10.♕a4 a6 11.♘xc6 ♘xc6 12.♗e2 and Black has avoided getting into a mess. Nevertheless, White now has a better pawn structure.

If Black instead continues 5... ♘c6 6.♗b5 then he needs to tread carefully. An obvious example is the game Macak – Stull (Differdange 2008): 6...♗g4?! (6...♘db4 7.♕e2 ♗g4 was correct) 7.h3 ♗xf3 8.♕xf3 e6 9.0-0 ♕h4 10.c4 ♘de7 11.♖d1 a6?! 12.♕d3! f5 13.♗xc6+ bc 14.♘d2 h6 15.♘f3 ♕h5 16.♗e3 and White should end up with a point. The continuation 5...c6 transposes after 6.♗e2 ♗g4 7.0-0 ♗xf3 8.♗xf3 to the well-known variation 4...♗g4 5.♗e2 c6 6.0-0 ♗xf3 7.♗xf3 de 8.de.

6. h2-h3 ...

If 6.c4?! ♘b4 7.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 White's need to defend c2 prevents him from exploiting his opponent's inability to castle. Black's pieces are set up more actively: 8.♘a3 e6 9.♘g5 ♔e8 10.♗e2 ♗f5 11.0-0 ♘8c6 12.♘f3 a6 13.♗d2 ♖d8 14.♗c3 ♗c5 15.♗d1 ♔e7 16.♗a4 h6 17.h3 g5 (P.Chandler – V.Bagirov, Giessen 1994).

6.♗c4 is analyzed via the move order 4...♗g4 5.♗c4 de 6.de. Developing the bishop to e2 as a

rule doesn't lead to a separate line either.

6. ... ♗g4xf3

6...♗h5?! is hardly ever seen due to the standard sacrifice 7.e6! After this the game can continue 7...fe 8.♗e2 ♗xf3 9.♗xf3 ♘c6 10.0-0 ♕d6 11.c4 ♘b6 12.♘a3 and White is guaranteed to win back the pawn with a lasting advantage thanks to his pawn setup.

7. ♕d1xf3 ...

This position is more often encountered after 4...♗g4 5.h3 ♗xf3 6.♕xf3 de 7.de, but in the 4...♗g4 system it's just a sub-variation, whereas here it is the main line.

7. ... e7-e6

8. ♕f3-g3 ...

This move defends the pawn on e5 while attacking Black's g7 pawn. This line is named after the great theoretician Boleslavsky (who played it against Mikenas, Moscow 1940). Yet this line has only been played in a handful of games! White usually prefers to move the queen to the center: 8.♕e4 ♘d7 9.♗c4 c6 10.0-0 b5!? (this was a novelty, although the continuation 10...♕c7 11.♖e1 0-0-0 is also fine) 11.♗b3 ♕c7 12.♖e1 ♗e7 13.♘d2 0-0 14.♘f3 ♖fd8 15.♗g5 ♘c5 16.♕e2 h6 17.♗xe7 ♘xe7 18.c3 ♘xb3 19.ab a5 20.♖ad1 ♘g6 21.♕e3 c5. Black already has a certain initiative here (Vujakovic – Kovacevic, Sibenik 2008).

8.c4?! is not a good idea due to 8...♘b4 9.♕e4 ♘d7, which is why 8.a3 is sometimes played, allowing c2-c4 on the following move. Strong chess players would play this line a long time ago. After 8...♘d7 9.c4 ♘e7 10.♗f4 ♘c6 11.♕g3 ♘d4 12.♕c3 c5! 13.♘d2 ♕c7 14.♘f3 ♘xf3+ 15.gf 0-0-0 Mikenas gradually outplayed the still raw Tigran Petrosian (Tbilisi 1944). That game, as well as the line 10.♕xb7 c6 11.♘d2 ♘c5 12.♕b4 ♕d4 13.♘f3 ♕e4+ 14.♗e3 ♘f5 15.♕c3 ♘a4 16.♕b3 ♘c5 17.♕c3 ♘a4 (and a draw by repetition), demonstrates that the centralized knight can be very useful.

Kupreichik verses Nozdrachev (Kolomna 2013) based his play on the vulnerability of c2: 8.♗c4 ♘c6 9.♗b5 ♘db4 10.0-0 ♕d5 11.♕xd5 ed 12.♗a4 0-0-0 13.a3 ♘a6 14.♗xc6 bc 15.b4 c5 16.b5 ♘b8 17.♘c3 d4 18.♘e4 ♖e8 19.♘g5 h6 20.♘f3?! ♘d7 21.♗f4 g5 22.♗g3 ♗g7 23.♖fe1 ♖e6, and the target was methodically attacked. The meandering knight should have captured the pawn and only after that retired to base – 20.♘xf7 ♖h7 21.f4 g6 22.e6 ♖xe6 23.♘e5 ♗d6 24.♘c4 with an equal position.

8. ... ♘b8-c6

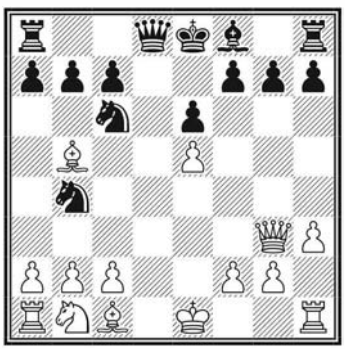
The textbook attack on the e5 pawn 8...♘d7 9.♗e2 c6 can be countered with 10.♘a3 (10...♕c7?! 11.♘c4 0-0-0 12.♘d6+ ♗xd6 13.ed ♕a5+ 14.c3, and the d6 pawn is like a nail in the enemy camp). He needs to think about evacuating the king, for example with the help

of 10...♕a5+!? 11.♗d2 ♗b4 12.0-0-0 ♗xd2+ 13.♖xd2 0-0. Mikenas versus Boleslavsky continued 10...♘e7 11.0-0 (the line proposed by Boleslavsky 11.♘c4 ♘f5 12.♕c3 is dubious due to 12...♘b6 13.0-0 ♕d4 14.♗d2 ♗c5) 11...♘f5 12.♕f4 ♗xa3 13.ba 0-0 14.♗d3 ♕a5 15.♗b2, and here he should play as suggested by Taylor – 15...♘b6 16.♖ab1 ♖ad8. The active bishops are probably not sufficient compensation for the defects in the pawn structure.

9. ♗f1-b5 ...

It's well known that in response to a2-a3 the knight heads from the center to the kingside via e7 (whether to f5 or g6 is a matter of taste).

9. ... ♘d5-b4



10. 0-0! ...

Jana Jackova was a talented chess player with a sharp tactical style (who then chose a career in business). Even Anatoly Karpov fell victim to one of her attacks in a standard tournament game! Clearly the boring continuation 10.♗a4 b5 11.♗b3 ♘b4 12.♘a3 c6 was of no interest to the Czech player.

10. ... ♘b4xc2

11. ♗c1-g5 ♗f8-e7

Palliser agrees to give up the chance to castle, but continuing 11...♕d7 12.♘c3 ♘xa1 13.♖xa1 a6 14.♗a4 would not have guaranteed him an easy life either. If 14...b5?, then White wins with the pretty combination 15.♖d1 ♘d4 16.♘xb5! ab 17.♖xd4! ♗d6 18.♗b3. Or after 14...♗c5 15.♖d1 ♗d4 16.♗xc6 bc 17.b4! ♖b8 18.♗e3 ♖xb4 19.♕xg7 ♖f8 20.a3 ♖c4 21.♗h6 ♕e7 22.♘e2 c5 23.♖b1 the rook finds a new file to work along. If Black plays 16...♗xf2+ 17.♕xf2 ♕xc6 then the knight joins the melee with 18.♘e4! h6 (18...♕xe4?? 19.♕c5) 19.♘f6+! gf 20.♕xf6 ♕c5+ 21.♔h2 hg 22.♕xh8+ ♕f8 23.♕f6 and White has the advantage. Instead, Black should probably give up his queen – 14...♕c8 15.♗xc6+ bc 16.♖d1 h6 17.♖d8+ ♕xd8 18.♗xd8 ♖xd8 with chances of equality.

12. ♗b5xc6+ b7xc6

13. ♗g5xe7 ...

13.♕c3 ♘xa1 14.♕c6+ ♔f8 15.♗xe7+ ♔xe7 16.♕c5+ ♔e8 17.♘c3 also looks fine, but White didn't want to withdraw his guns from targeting the g7 pawn.

13. ... ♔e8xe7

14. ♘b1-c3 ♘c2xa1

15. ♕g3xg7?! ...

Jackova takes the pawn at an inappropriate moment. The correct

continuation was 15.♖d1 ♕c8 16.♕xg7 with various ways of forcing perpetual check, the most pleasing to the eye being 16...♖g8 17.♕f6+ ♔e8 18.♘e4 ♖g6 19.♕h8+ ♔e7 20.♕xh7 ♕h8 (to counter the check from h4) 21.♖d7+! ♔xd7 22.♕xf7+ ♔c8 23.♘c5 ♕g8 24.♕d7+ ♔b8 25.♘a6+ ♔b7 26.♕xc7+ ♔a6 27.♕c6+.

15. ... ♖h8-g8

16. ♕g7-f6+ ♔e7-e8?!

Now it's the English master's turn to err. After 16...♔f8 17.♕h6+ ♔g7 18.♖xa1 ♕g5 19.♕xg5 ♖xg5 White's chances of surviving the endgame the exchange down are minimal.

17. ♕f6-f3 ♘a1-c2

18. ♕f3xc6+ ♔e8-f8

19. ♖f1-d1 ♕d8-b8

Palliser is unwilling to give up the trapped knight for nothing. It's clear that he didn't expect to gain anything after 19...♕e8!? 20.♕e4 ♖d8 21.♕xc2 ♖xd1+ 22.♘xd1.

20. ♖d1-d7 ...

The white queen could also return to the kingside with a number of interesting lines. After 20.♕e4 ♘b4 21.♕xh7 ♕b7 22.♘e4 ♘d5 23.♖xd5! ♕xd5 24.♕h6+ ♔e7 25.♕h4+ f6 26.♕h7+ ♔f8 27.♕h6+ ♔e7 29.♕h7+ White goes for perpetual check, while if 23...ed 24.e6! fe 25.♘c5 ♕c6 26.♘d7+ ♔e8 27.♘f6+ ♔d8 28.♕xg8+ ♔e7 29.♕g7+ ♔d6 30.♕g3+ e5 31.♕g6 ♕c1+ 32.♔h2 ♕f4+ then it's Black who delivers perpetual check. Finally, after 23...♖xg2+!? 24.♔xg2 ♕xd5 (24...ed?? 25.e6! fe 26.♘g5 with mate) 25.♕h4 ♕xe5 26.♘f6+ ♔g7 27.♕g4+ ♔xf6 28.♕f3+ ♔xg5 29.♕xa8 ♕d5+ 30.♕xd5 cd 31.b4 the pawn ending should be a draw. A chess death by draw?!

20. ... ♖g8-g7

Or 20...♘b4 21.♕c5+ ♔g7 22.♕e7 ♕e8 23.♕f6+ ♔f8 24.♕h6+ ♖g7 25.♖d4 ♔g8 26.♖xb4. The knight failed to avoid its fate and a draw is again on the cards.

21. a2-a3! ♘c2-e1!

22. g2-g3 ♖g8-g6

It was worth considering 22... a6, which prevents the knight's invasion. After 23.♘e4 ♘f3+ 24.♔g2 ♘h4+ 25.♔h1 ♘f5 the knight eventually got home via the scenic route, although due to the messed up position of Black's other pieces the extra rook may prove insufficient for the full point. White should instead continue 24.♔g1 ♖g6 25.♖xc7 ♘xe5 26.♕c5+ ♔g8 27.♕xe5 ♖a7 29.♖c5 ♕xe5 30.♖xe5 with a likely draw, as the black rooks are not coordinated.

23. ♘c3-b5 ♔f8-g7

24. ♘b5xc7 ♕b8xb2?

He should have continued 24... ♕c8 25.♖d1! ♖b8 26.♖xe1 ♕b7 27.♘e8+ ♔f8 28.♕xb7 ♖xb7 29.♘f6 ♖xb2 30.h4 ♔g7 with the idea of sacrificing this star-crossed rook. It should be a draw.

25. ♕c6xa8 ♕b2-e2

God knows what Palliser was thinking. The continuation 25... ♕b1 26.♘e8+ ♔h6 27.♕b7 was also easy to see. This was probably a typical example of the defensive psyche – in this case, a desire to grab the initiative at any price.

26. ♘c7-e8+ ♔g7-h6
27. ♖f1xf7 ♕e2-d1
28. ♔g1-h2
1-0

Chapter 61. 5...♘d7

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 d6xe5
5. ♘f3xe5 ♘b8-d7



Black wastes no time in chasing White's knight from the center. This strategically correct plan has a tactical weakness. According to the Megabase, Bulgarian master Luben Popov invented 5...♘d7. Back in 1960 Jerzy Kostro replied to this move by withdrawing his knight to f3. However, three years later Josef Kupper accepted the challenge and sacrificed his knight on f7, thereby writing a new chapter in the theory of the Alekhine Defense.

6. ♘e5xf7! ...

6.♘f3 is analyzed in Game 66. Devotee of eccentric variations Grandmaster Westerinen also introduced 6.♘d3 to practice. The very first time that he did, Black reminded his opponent of the weak pawn on d4 and equalized in true textbook style: 6...e6 7.c4 ♘e7 8.♘d2 ♘f5 9.♘f3 c5 10.dc ♘xc5 11.♗e2 ♘xd3 (sending the bishop to c6 via d7 is also fine) 12.♕xd3 ♗b4+ 13.♔f1 0-0 14.g4 ♘e7 15.a3 ♗d6 16.♗g5 ♕c7 17.♖d1 ♗f4 18.♗xf4 ♕xf4 19.♕d6 ♘g6 20.♕xf4 ♘xf4 (Westerinen – D.Cramling, Gausdal 1980).

In the fourth game of his candidates match against Larsen (Bled 1965) Tal didn't fancy the knight sac and instead went for 6.♗c4. After 6...e6 7.♕g4 h5 8.♕e2 ♘xe5 9.de ♗d7 10.0-0 ♗c6 11.♖d1 ♕e7 he should have continued 12.♗xd5 ♗xd5 13.c4 ♗c6 14.♘c3, after which it's not easy for Black to

complete his development. Larsen is right, recommending 10...♕h4 (where the queen doesn't prevent the bishop from developing). If 6... ♘xe5 7.de c6 8.0-0 the bishop can move to f5, which is discussed in Chapter 65 (reached via the move order 5...c6 6.♗c4 ♘d7 7.0-0 ♘xe5 8.de).

6. ... ♔e8xf7

7. ♕d1-h5+ ♔f7-e6

The main drawback of the 5... ♘d7 line is that an inferior player can sacrifice the knight not to launch a powerful attack, but with the aim of immediately forcing perpetual check. Moreover, he has a choice of g4, h3 and e2 squares. In reply to 8.♕g4 (h3, e2)+ Black cannot play 8...♔d6? due to 9.c4 ♘5f6 10.c5+, which wins back a piece and leads to a winning position.

8. c2-c4 ...

If 8.♕g4+ it's not a good idea for the king to run to the queenside. After 8...♔d6? 9.c4 Black immediately has to return his ill-gotten gains, and on vastly inferior terms. An 'offhand' game Fischer – Larsen (Santa Monica 1966) continued 9...♘7f6?! (9... e6 10.cd ed 11.♗f4+ ♔e7 12.♗d3 c6 is more resilient) 10.♕g3+ ♔e6 11.cd+ ♕xd5 12.♘c3 ♕xd4 13.♗e3 ♕b4 14.a3 ♕xb2 15.♗c4+ ♔d7 16.♖d1+ ♔e8 17.♘b5, and the 'battle' was already over. Black should have continued 8...♔f7 and proposed a draw.

Nevertheless, sacrificing the piece and immediately forcing a draw is for cowards. Apart from a committed attack in the center White can also take a cunning roundabout path (see Game 67).

8. ... ♘d5-f6

9. d4-d5+ ♔e6-d6

10. ♕h5-f7 ...

The queen now threatens the killer move 11.♕e6+, without worrying about being attacked. 10.♕f5? ♘c5 11.♗f4+ e5 12.♕xe5+ ♔d7 is much weaker as Black now threatens ♗f8-d6 – White's development was too slow. A game between two strong Brazilian players Matsuura – Lima (Rio de Janeiro 2000) didn't even make it to the 20th move: 12.♗xe5+ ♔e7 13.♕f4?! ♔f7 14.♗xc7 ♕e8+ 15.♔d1 ♘ce4 16.♘d2 g5 17.♕e3 ♗c5 18.♘xe4 ♘xe4 19.♕f3+ ♔g7. The black king is safe, but White's is done for.

The forcing variation 10.c5+!? ♘xc5 11.♗f4+ ♔d7 12.♗b5+ c6 13.dc+ bc 14.♕xc5 only promises White equality after 14...♕b6! 15.♕xb6 ab 16.♗c4 ♗a6 17.♗xa6 ♖xa6 18.♘c3 e6 (Shcherbakov). On the other hand, continuing 14... cb? 15.♕xb5+ ♔e6 16.♕c6+ ♔f5 17.♕xa8 ♔xf4 18.♕xa7 makes no sense (Matsuura – Cordeiro, Curitiba 2011). Black's king is already in a tough position, he has failed to complete his development and he has lost his material advantage.

10. ... ♘d7-e5

This move, which is both defensive and an attacking one, is played much more frequently than other knight retreats. Moreover, it looks like 10...♘b6 has been refuted: 11.c5+! ♔xc5 12.♗e3+ ♔d6 13.♗f4+ e5 14.de+ ♔c6 15.♘c3 ♘bd5 16.0-0-0 ♗d6 17.♘xd5 ♘xd5 18.e7! ♘xe7 19.♗e2 ♕g8 20.♖xd6+! cd 20.♕xe7. Or the king can take a different path to the gallows, where he gets blown away by White's tactical strikes: 15... ♕e7 16.♗b5+ ♔c5 17.♗e3+ ♔b4 18.a3+ ♔b3 19.♘a2! (20.♘c1+ ♔xb2 21.♗d4+ ♔c2 22.♗d3x) 19...♕d6 20.♘c1+ ♔xb2 21.♖a2+ ♔c3 22.♕xc7+!! ♕xc7 23.♗d3! ♗xa3 24.♖xa3+ ♔b4 25.♖b3+ and mate.

Moving the knight back to its initial square doesn't look very pleasing to the eye, but it probably isn't a losing move either. Obviously, after 10...♘b8 11.c5+! ♔xc5?! 12.♗e3+ ♔d6 13.♘a3 ♗g4 (13...♘a6? 14.♘c4+ ♔d7 15.♘a5!, and there is no defense to 16.♗b5+) 14.♗e2! ♔d7 15.♗xg4 ♘xg4 16.♕f5+ ♔e8 17.♕xg4 Black's position is one you wouldn't wish on your worst enemy, but it is worth testing 11...♔d7 12.♗b5+ c6 13.dc+ bc 14.0-0 ♕a5. Khalifman's recommendation, 15.♗c4, after 15...♕xc5 16.♖d1+ ♔c7 17.♗f4+ ♔b7 18.♗e2 ♗d7 19.♘a3 assures White compensation for the knight, but far from winning. The light-squared bishop is best returned to its initial square: 15.♖d1+ ♔c7 16.♗f4+ ♔b7 17.♗f1!?, and if Black plays 17...♕b4? then the effective 18.♖d4!! proves decisive (if 17.♗e2 ♕b4 the rook attack doesn't work due to check on e1).

11. ♗c1-f4 c7-c5

Black has the specific objective of stopping c4-c5, as well as the more general objective of blocking the center. Another reasonable move is 11...g5 12.c5+ ♔xc5 13.♗xe5 ♕xd5 14.♕xd5+ ♔xd5 15.♗xc7, although the activity of Black's king is not reflected in his other pieces.

12. ♘b1-c3 ...

12.dc?? leads to simplifications that are fatal for White: 12... ♕a5+! 13.♘c3 ♔xc6 14.b4 ♘xf7 15.ba e5 16.♗d2 ♗b4 17.g3 ♗xc3 18.♗g2+ e4 19.♗xc3 ♘g5 20.0-0-0 ♗g4 21.♖de1 ♖he8 (Solovjov – Shpagin, St. Petersburg 2003). The remaining moves (and even some of the precedent ones) are already unnecessary.

There are no definitive evaluations yet of the interesting continuations 12.♘d2!? and 12.b4!?. Moving the knight to d2 contains some nasty threats against the pinned knight, but Black in turn is ready to lasso the white queen: 12.♘d2 g5 13.♗g3 ♗h6 14.♘f3 ♖f8 15.♘xe5 ♕a5+ 16.♔d1 ♖xf7 17.♘c6+ e5 18.♘xa5 ♗f5 19.♘b3 g4 20.♘d2 ♗g5 21.♗e2 h5 22.f3 with an extra pawn in an unclear position (Hellers – Hillarp Persson, Sweden 2000). In response to 13...g4 Bagirov

demonstrates 14.0-0-0 ♗h6 15.♖e1 ♖f8 16.♗xe5+ ♔d7 17.♕e6+ ♔e8 18.♕d6! ed 19.♗xf6+ ♔d7 20.♗xd8 ♔xd8. Once again we see the white queen trapped, the black queen assassinated, an extra pawn for White and Black with compensation for the said pawn. Black can also force a draw with 12...g6!? 13.♘f3 (13.0-0-0?? ♗h6!) 13...♘g4 14.h3 ♕a5+ 15.♔e2 ♕b4! 16.hg ♕xb2+ 17.♔e3 ♕c3+ 18.♔e4 ♕c2+, and the email game between Zednik and Sakai (2001) ended in perpetual check.

White's persistent desire to open the game with 12.b4!? forces the black queen to demonstrate some amazing gymnastics: 12...♕b6 13.bc+ ♕xc5 14.♘c3 a6 15.♖d1 (defending against the threat of 15... ♕d4) 15...♕a3! 16.c5+ (16.♖d3? ♕c1+!) 16...♕xc5 17.♖d3 ♕b4 18.♗xe5+ ♔xe5 19.♗e2 ♔d6 20.0-0 – and the initiative is clearly worth the sacrificed piece. Shcherbakov's variation 14...♕d4 15.♘b5+ ♔c5 16.♘xd4 ♘xf7 17.♘b3+(?!) ♔b4 18.♗d2+ ♔a3 (and checks from the c1 and d2 squares), can be improved for White: 17.♘b5! ♗f5 (to counter the threat 18.♗e3+ ♔b4 19.♖b1+ ♔a5 20.♗d2+ ♔b6 21.a4!) 18.♗e3+ ♔b4 19.♗d2+ ♔c5 20.a3! ♔b6 21.c5+! ♔xc5 22.♖c1+ ♔xd5 23.♘c7+ ♔d6 24.♗b4+ ♔d7 25.♘xa8 ♘d5 26.♗b5+ ♔d8 27.0-0 e6 28.♗xf8 ♖xf8 29.♖fd1. White extracts his knight from the corner with hopes of victory.

12. ... a7-a6

13. b2-b4! ...

After 13.0-0-0? g6 14.♗xe5+ ♔xe5 15.d6 ♗h6+ 16.♔b1 ♕e8 17.♖d5+ ♘xd5 18.♕xd5+ ♔f6 19.♗d3 ed 20.♕xd6+ ♔g7 21.♘d5 ♖f8 22.♕xc5 ♕e5 (Goikhman – Savchenko, St. Petersburg 2011) White is out of attacking resources and is losing. Boris Savchenko scored a double-whammy here: first, his opponent, whose rating was much lower, rejected a draw by perpetual check, and then he chose a line that was already refuted by theory. Castling long was also responsible for White losing in the games De Firmian – Rohde (Long Beach 1989), Rozentalis – A.Sokolov (Bern 1992), Rublevsky – Hauchard (Oakham 1992) and Ziatdinov – Hauchard (France 1992). As we see, Arnaud Hauchard also scored a double-whammy!

13. ... b7-b6!?

Bagirov ripped up this move, which seems a natural way to defend c5, in his monograph. Maybe that is why Khalifman completely ignores it. However, it is worth investigating further, especially as Black looks bad if he plays any other move. Take, for example, Keres' suggestion 13... cb? 14.c5+! ♔xc5 15.♘a4+ ♔d6 16.♘b2! (with the double threat of 17.♘c4+ and 17.♘d3). Now Black has to return the piece and hope for a small miracle after 16...b5 17.♘d3 ♔c7 18.♗xe5+ ♔b7 19.♗e2.

If 13...♕b6 then White's best

reply is 14.♖c1!, as this defends the knight and, if given the chance, this will add strength to the move c4-c5. The game Manca – Sulskis (Italy 2012) lasted just another two moves: 14...g5 15.♗g3 ♗f5? 16.♗d3! Here the Lithuanian Grandmaster resigned, and not a moment too soon (16...♗g4 17.0-0 ♘fd7 18.♗f5). If Black plays 15...h5 then Khalifman suggests 16.bc+ ♕xc5 17.♕g6! ♕d4 18.♕c2! (18.c5+ ♔c7? 19.♕d3! destroys Black, although 18...♔d7 19.♕f5+ ♔d8 20.♕xe5 ♕xc5 is less clear) 18...h4 19.c5+ ♔d7 (19...♕xc5? 20.♘b5+! – and the rook came in handy!) 20.♖d1 ♘f3+ 21.gf ♕xc5 22.♗e5 and so on right up to move 40(!) with a sorry verdict on Black's position.

The principled capture with 14...♕xb4 was also analyzed by Khalifman: 15.♗d3 g5 (15...♕b2 16.0-0 ♕d2 17.♘e4! ♘xe4 18.♗xe4) 16.♗g3 h5 17.0-0 h4 18.♗xe5+ ♔xe5 19.f4+! gf 20.♘e4! ♕b2 21.♘xf6 ♕d4+ 22.♔h1 h3 23.g3 ♔d6 24.♘e8+ ♔d7 25.♕e6+ ♔e8 26.♗g6+ ♔d8 27.♕b6+ ♔d7, with an improvement 28.d6! ed 29.♖ce1 (planning 30.♗e8 and mate). The talented juniors Predke and Danilenko (Batumi 2010), who hadn't seen this analysis, improvised: 20.♖ce1+ ♔d6 21.♖e6+? ♔c7 22.d6+ ♔b8 23.de ♕xc3 24.ef♕ ♖xf8 25.♕xf8 ♕d4+ 26.♖f2 ♘g4 27.♕d6+ ♕xd6 28.♖xd6 ♔c7 29.♖d5 ♘xf2 30.♔xf2. The resulting endgame logically led to a draw, but White could have kept the full point with 21.♘e4+! ♘xe4 22.♕xf4+ ♔d7 23.♕xe4.

If 14...g6 then some theoretical recommendations are better than others. After 15.♗d3?! ♘fg4 16.♗e2 ♔c7 17.bc ♕xc5 18.♗xg4 ♕d6 19.♗xc8 ♖xc8 20.♗xe5 ♕xe5+ 21.♘e2 ♗h6 22.f4 ♕e4 23.0-0 ♔b8 24.♕e6 ♕xe6 25.de ♖hd8 Black has managed to hide his king by the time White hides his, and stands no worse in the endgame despite being a pawn down. On the other hand, 15.♗e2! ♕c7 16.♖d1! ♗f5 17.♗xe5+ ♔xe5 18.d6! leads to a quick win for White.

14. ♖a1-b1 ...

The queen has harried the enemy king from the right, and the rook will join in from the left. Ponkratov versus Tomilin (Sochi 2005) blocked the queenside, which, odd as it may seem, is actually fine: 14.b5!? a5 15.♗d3 g6 (in Shcherbakov's variation 15...g5? 16.♗g3 ♗h6 17.0-0 ♕f8 18.♗xe5+ ♔xe5 19.♖ae1+ ♔d4 20.♖e3! ♔xc3 21.♗xh7+! the queen squeezes through g6 to participate in the mating attack on the travelling king) 16.♘e4+ ♘xe4 17.♗xe4 ♗h6 18.♗xe5+ ♔xe5 19.d6! ♗e6 20.♕f3 ♖f8?! 21.♕c3+ (21.♕e2!?) 21...♔xe4 22.f3+ ♔f5 23.g4+ ♔f4 24.♔e2! (24.♔f2? ♗xg4!) ♗xc4+?? 25.♔f2! ♗d3 26.♖ae1! This tragic end could have been avoided by 24...♗xg4! 25.♕e3+

♔f5 26.fg+ ♔f6 27.♕xh6 ♔e6, and a complex struggle remains ahead. Instead of 20...♖f8 two other options are worth considering. After 20...♗d2+!? 21.♔xd2 ♕xd6+ 22.♔c2 ♖af8 23.♕e2 ♔f6 24.♖ad1 ♕e5 Black plans the combination with exchanges 25...♕xe4+! leading to a worse but defensible ending. Shcherbakov also suggests sacrificing the exchange with: 20...♗xc4!? 21.♗xa8 ♕xa8 22.♕c3+ ♔d6 23.♕xc4 ♕xg2 24.♖d1+ ♔e5! (24...♔c7?! 25.♕e6!) 25.♖f1 ♗f4 – this position isn't hopeless either.

14. ... c5xb4

The value of each move here is very high. Bagirov's fascinating line 14...g5 15.♗g3 ♗h6(?) 16.bc+ bc 17.♖b7!! ♗d7 18.♗d3 ♕e8 19.♗f5!! ♕xf7 20.♘e4+ ♘xe4 21.♖d7 mate can be continued with analysis of the line 19...♗xf5 20.♘e4+! ♘xe4 21.♕xf5. However, 18...♕f8 clearly continues Black's resistance, so the maestro's recommendation needs to be revised: 18.♗e2! ♕f8 19.♗g4!! ♗xg4 20.♕xf6+! ef 21.♘e4 mate. Both pretty and accurate!

Given that instead of 15...♗h6? Black can move his king in the style of Steinitz: 15...cb! 16.♖xb4 ♔c5! 17.♗xe5 ♔xb4, White needs to choose the best occasion to exchange on c5. It's a bit too early to do this on move 14, as the black queen energetically intervenes in the game: 14.bc+ bc 15.♖b1 ♕a5 16.♖c1 ♕a3 17.♖c2 g5 18.♗xe5+ ♔xe5 19.♗d3 ♔d6. A stronger line is 14.♖b1 g5 15.bc+ bc 16.♖b7! ♗d7 17.♗g3 ♖b8 (17...♗h6 is analyzed above) 18.♖xd7+! ♕xd7 19.♗d3 ♗h6 20.0-0 ♖hf8 21.♖e1! ♔c7 22.♗xe5+ ♔e8 23.♕e6 ♕xe6 24.de ♖b7 25.♘a4, where White is likely to win a second pawn for the exchange and has great potential.

15. ♖b1xb4 ...

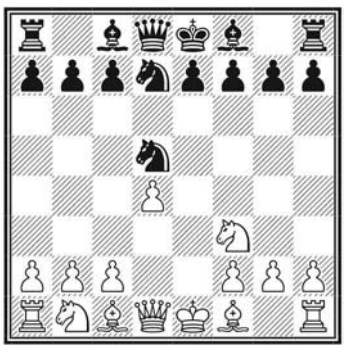


15...♔c5? 16.♖b1! ♘xf7 17.♘a4+ ♔d4 18.f3! leads to mate (Bagirov). However, the way to trap the queen is not to follow the line in his monograph (15...g5 16.♗g3 ♗h6? 17.c5+! bc 18.♘e4+ ♘xe4 19.♖xe4), but instead with 15...g5 16.♗g3 ♖g8! (threatening 17...♖g7). The consequences of the line 17.♘e4+ ♘xe4 18.♕xg8 ♗f5 19.♗e2 e6 are unpredictable. While the programs Stockfish and Komodo both see Black's defenses as being destroyed, Black actually has 15...e6!? 16.♗e2 ♕d7! 17.♖xb6+ ♔c7 18.♖c6+ ♔d8 19.♕xd7+ ♘exd7 20.♗c7+ ♔e8 21.♖xe6+ ♔f7 in reserve. White

now has three pawns for the piece, but it's unclear whether he has any advantage.

Game 66
L.Ljubojevic – I.Ivanchuk
Monaco 1998, blind

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**d6xe5**
5.	**♘f3xe5**	**♘b8-d7**
6.	**♘e5-f3**	**...**



6. ... e7-e6

Black treats the knight retreat as a small achievement and postpones the development of his queen's bishop until better times. After 6... g6 7.c4 ♘5f6 8.♘c3 ♗g7 9.♗e2 0-0 10.0-0 c5 11.d5 a6 12.♖e1 ♘b6 13.♗e3 ♕c7 14.♕d2 ♗g4 15.♗f4 ♕c8 16.b3 ♖e8 17.h3 ♗f5 (Navara – Siebenhaar, Mainz 2009 rapid game) Black developed the bishop at the cost of some obvious concessions. 6...c6 7.c4 ♘c7 has not been seriously tested, after which g7-g6 could be more effective.

7. c2-c4 ...

The light-squared fianchetto is not a key weapon in the Alekhine Defense, and in almost all cases Black finds a decent way to counter it. Here he can do this by activating the queenside: 7.g3 c5 8.♗g2 b6 9.0-0 ♗b7 10.♕e2 (Kuporosov – Abrashkin, St. Petersburg 2002) 10...♕b6 11.♘e4 cd 12.♘xd7 ♔xd7 – the temporary residence of the black king in the center is nothing to worry about.

7. ... ♘d5-f6

After 7...♗b4+ 8.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 9.♕xd2 ♘5f6 10.♘c3 0-0 11.♗e2 c5 12.0-0 cd 13.♕xd4 a6 14.♖fd1 ♕c7 15.♖d2 b6 16.♕d6 ♖a7 17.♖ad1 (Mazi – Posch, Austria 2004) White dominates the central file. Obviously, c7-c5 only made Black's difficulties even worse, and instead he should have chosen 11...b6.

8. ♘b1-c3 ...

White can also begin with 8.♗e2. For example, 8...♗e7 9.♘c3 0-0 10.♗f4 c5 11.dc ♘xc5 12.♕c2 ♗d7?! (12...♕b6 would have prevented White's next move) 13.b4 ♘a6 14.a3 ♘b8 15.0-0 ♘h5 16.♗e3 ♕c7 17.♘d4 ♘f4 (Oral – Kopal, Luhacovice 2003) 18.♗f3 ♗c6 19.♘cb5 ♕e5 20.g3 ♘g6 21.♘xa7 and White is a pawn up with a better position. Black should consider the pin with the loss of a tempo.

8. ... ♗f8-b4

8...c5 is played more often. Nikolenko gradually achieved equality in his game versus Jakovenko (Moscow 2006) after 9.d5 ♘b6 10.♗f4 ♗d6 11.♗xd6 ♕xd6 12.♘b5 ♕d8 13.de ♗xe6 14.♕d6 ♕xd6 15.♘xd6+ ♔e7 16.♘xb7 ♘xc4 17.b3 ♘a3. Bagirov in his game with Benjamin (Manila 1992) demonstrated that the queen's knight deserved a better career: 9...ed 10.cd ♗d6 11.♗g5 h6 12.♗h4 0-0 13.♗e2 ♘e5 14.0-0 ♘g6 15.♗g3 a6 16.a4 b6 17.♖e1 ♗b7 18.♕d3 ♖fd8. Black easily maintains equality here, while with the help of 13...a6 and ♕d8-c7 he could have extracted even more from the blockade.

So it seems that White should reject d4-d5. Lutz versus Tischbierek (Germany 1999) gained a queenside pawn majority and stable advantage in a quiet game: 9.♗e2 cd 10.♘xd4 ♗e7 11.0-0 0-0 12.♗e3 a6 13.♕a4 ♘e5 14.h3 ♕c7 15.♖ac1 ♗d7 16.♕b3 ♘c6 17.♘f3 ♖ac8 18.♖fd1 ♘a5 19.♕b6! ♕xb6 (19...♘xc4? 20.♕xc7 ♖xc7 21.♗xc4 ♖xc4 22.♘e5) 20.♗xb6 ♘c6 21.a3 ♗d8 22.♗c5 ♖e8 23.b4. Greet recommended equalizing chances with 16...♖ac8 17.♘a4 ♘e4 18.♘b6 ♖cd8 19.♘xd7 ♖xd7 20.♕c2 ♘f6, while he also suggested 13.♕d2 ♕c7 14.♗f4!? ♕b6 15.a3 ♖e8 16.♘f3 followed by ♖f1-d1 as an improvement for White.

9. ♕d1-c2 b7-b6
10. a2-a3 ♗b4xc3+
11. ♕c2xc3 ♗c8-b7
12. ♗f1-e2 0-0
13. 0-0 ♘f6-e4
14. ♕c3-c2 f7-f5

There are some unanswered questions about this pawn advance. Ultimately, the knight on d7 is incapable of replacing the pawn in the Dutch chain, while the holes in Black's camp may have an impact later. 14...h6 and then 15...♘ef6 was safe enough.

15. b2-b4 ♖f8-f6
16. ♖f1-d1 ♕d8-e7
17. ♘f3-e5 ...

But why didn't Ljubojevic play 17.c5 ♗d5 18.c6 ♘f8 19.♘e5 ? Probably, he believed that the front for an attack on the queenside was too narrow, and his opponent's counter-threats ultimately harmless.

17. ... ♘d7xe5
18. d4xe5 ♖f6-g6



19. ♗e2-h5? ...

Maybe the Yugoslav Grandmaster saw (if such a word is appropriate

for a blind game) that after 19.♗f3 c5!? Black had the killer threat 20... ♘d2!! However, 20.♔h1! throws a spanner in those works (20... cb?! 21.ab ♕xb4?? 22.♗a3 ♕c5 23.♗d6), and White's chances are still better.

19. ... ♖g6xg2+!?

The continuation 19...♘xf2! 20.♕xf2 ♖xg2+ 21.♕xg2 ♗xg2 22.♔xg2 ♖d8 23.♗e3 f4! is objectively no weaker, as Black removes one of the bishops. 19... ♘d2!? 20.♗xg6 ♕g5 21.f3 ♘xf3+ 22.♔f1 ♘xh2+ 23.♔g1 ♘f3+ 24.♔f1 ♕g4! is less convincing, although Black is still better.

20. ♔g1xg2 ♘e4-d2+
21. f2-f3 ♕e7-g5+
22. ♔g1-f2 ♕g5-h4+
23. ♔f2-g1 ♕h4-g5+
24. ♔g1-f2 ♕h4xh5
25. ♕c2xd2 ♕h5xf3+
26. ♔f2-e1 ♕f3-h1+
27. ♔e1-f2 ♕h1xh2+
28. ♔f2-f1 ♕h2-h1+
29. ♔f1-f2 ♕h1-h4+
30. ♔f2-g1?! ...

30.♔e2 ♕xc4+ 31.♔e1 ♗f3 isn't particularly dangerous, just like 31.♕d3 ♕g1+ 32.♔f2 f4, but 30...♗f3 31.♗b2 ♕h1+ 32.♔f2 ♕h4+ 33.♔e3 f4+! finishes off the game. Ivanchuk restricts himself to opening an escape hole, which for now doesn't cause any harm.

30. ... h7-h6
31. ♗c1-b2 ♕h4-g4+?!

The bishop's invasion on f3 only wins if the king is on g1; later, once the king has been sheltered by his army, ♗b7-f3 would not cause any damage.

32. ♔g1-f2 ♔g8-h7
33. ♕d2-e2 ♕g4-f4+
34. ♔f2-e1 ♗b7-f3
35. ♖d1-d4! ♕f4xd4
36. ♗b2xd4 ♗f3xe2
37. ♔e1xe2 ...

We have now reached a complex ending where Black has slight chances of winning. Ljubojevic plays the rest of the game brilliantly: he opens up another file, installs his rook in the enemy camp and uses the combined efforts of his entire forces to stop the passed pawns.

37. ... ♖a8-d8
38. ♔e2-e3 g7-g5
39. c4-c5 h6-h5
40. c5xb6 c7xb6
41. ♖a1-c1 h5-h4
42. ♖c1-c7+ ♔h7-g6
43. ♖c7-e7! ...

This halts the pawn from behind enemy lines. If however 43.♖xa7? h3 then the rook would need to retreat to c1, which is unacceptable given that it needs to counter the passed pawn.

43. ... h4-h3
44. ♖e7-e6+ ♔g6-h5
45. ♖e6-e7 ♔h5-g4
46. e5-e6 h3-h2

After46...f4+ 47.♔e4 f3 48.♖h7?! ♖xd4+! 49.♔xd4 f2 50.♕e7 f1♕ 51.e8♕ ♕d1+ 52.♔c3 ♕c1+ Black destroys the rook, although even then he isn't guaranteed the full point. 48.♖f7! is stronger – in

the similar line where the rook pawn is advanced the rook is defended by the newly born queen.

47.	**♖e7-h7**	**♔g4-g3**
48.	**♖h7-h5**	**f5-f4+**
49.	**♔e3-e4**	**♖d8-e8**
50.	**♔e4-f5**	**g5-g4**
51.	**♗d4-e5**	**♖e8-f8+**
52.	**♔f5-g5**	**♖f8-g8+**
53.	**♔g5-f5**	**♖g8-f8+**
54.	**♔f5-g5**	**♖f8-g8+**

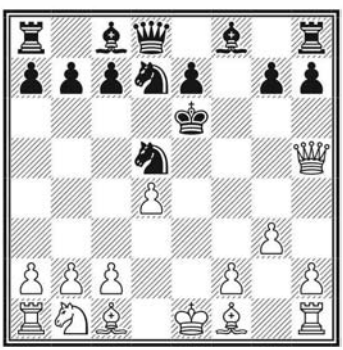
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Game 67

V.Yemelin – V.Popov

St. Petersburg 1998

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**d4xe5**
5.	**♘f3xe5**	**♘b8-d7**
6.	**♘e5xf7**	**♔e8xf7**
7.	**♕d1-h5+**	**♔f7-e6**
8.	**g2-g3**	**...**



The white bishop joins the attack via the kingside, as otherwise the bishop will fail to realize its potential.

8. ... b7-b5!?

The centralized knight is the meandering king's only protection, and in practice Black always keeps d5 under control. Unwise is 8...g6?! 9.♗h3+ ♔d6 10.♕e2 ♘7b6 11.♗f4+ (11.♗xc8 ♕xc8 12.♕e5+ ♔c6 13.♕xh8 – this line, recommended by Attila Schneider, is unconvincing even if the queen retreats from the dangerous corner – 13...♘f6 14.♘c3 ♕e6+ 15.♗e3 ♗h6 16.d5+! ♘fxd5 17.♕d4) 11... ♔c6 12.a4 a6 13.♗g2 e6 14.♗e5 ♗d6?! (compared with 14...♖g8 15.a5 ♔d7 – this sacrifice of the exchange isn't necessary) 15.♗xh8 ♕xh8 16.c3 ♔d7 (16...♘d7 17.a5 b5 18.ab ♘7xb6 19.0-0 and c3-c4) 17.a5 ♘f4 18.gf ♘d5 19.♘d2 ♘xf4 20.♕e4 (Berelowitsch – Neverov, Cairo 1999). White has a material advantage and Black's king is not out of danger.

If 8...♘7f6 9.♗h3+ ♔d6 10.♕e5+ ♔c6 11.♗g2 b5 12.a4 b4 13.c4 bc 14.bc ♗a6?! (Fluvia Poyatos – Aloma Vidal, Andorra 2008) then White is virtually winning after 15.c4! ♗xc4 16.♘d2. However, Black can play 14...e6 15.c4 ♗d6 16.♕e2 ♕e8 17.c5 ♔d7 18.cd cd to return the piece and his position is more bearable. Further, 11...e6 12.c4 ♗b4+ 13.♗d2 a5 is interesting.

9. a2-a4 c7-c6

Burgess's recommendation 9...

b4!? leads after 10.c4 bc 11.bc ♘7f6 12.♗h3+ ♔d6 13.♕e5+ ♔c6 to a fragment from the game Fluvia Poyatos – Aloma Vidal from the previous comment. Maybe Black should have played it.

10. ♗f1-h3+ ...

10.ab!? would allow the black king to escape to the kingside. After 10...g6 11.♕e2+ ♔f7 12.bc ♘7f6 13.♗g2 ♗g4 14.♕d2 (14.♕b5!?) 14...h5 15.c4 ♘b6 16.b3 ♗h6 17.f4 ♗f5 18.♘c3 h4 (Sivokho – Abrashkin, St. Petersburg 2002) the computer has a clear preference for White, but in fact it isn't that simple. Black has surrendered control over d5, but he has also gained some counterplay against the enemy king. After 12...♘7b6 13.♗g2 ♗g7 14.c4 ♘b4 15.d5 ♗f5 16.♗e4 ♗xe4 17.♕xe4 ♘4xd5! 18.cd ♕xd5 19.♕f4+ ♗f6 (Anand) Black returns the piece at the right time and equalizes. The unforced continuation 14.0-0 ♗f5 15.♖e1 (varying his plans depending on his opponent's action) makes it tougher for Black.

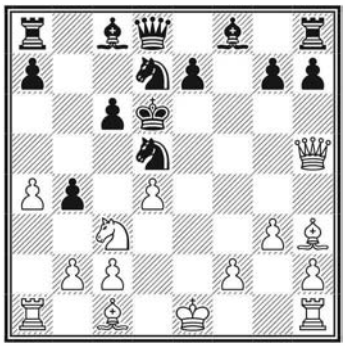
10. ... ♔e6-d6

11. ♘b1-c3 ...

11.ab cb 12.0-0 ♘7f6 13.♕e5+ ♔c6 14.♗g2 e6 15.c4 bc 16.♕e2 (Homuth – Pajeken, Germany 2012) 16...♔d7 17.♖e1 ♕b6 is quite unclear. The black king is no better placed, but White remains a piece down and the idea of strengthening the knight has been optimally implemented.

Shcherbakov suggested 11.♕e2!? with a continuation that is dangerous for Black: 11...b4 12.c4 bc 13.♘xc3. Playing for simplifications with 11... ♕a5+ 12.♗d2 b4 13.c4 bc 14.♘xc3 ♘xc3 15.♗xc3 ♕a6 doesn't protect him from danger due to 16.♕e4.

11. ... b5-b4



12. ♘c3xd5 ...

Balinov in him game with Posch (Oberwart 2001) demonstrated an effective improvement: 12.♗f4+! ♘xf4 13.♘e4+ h6 14.♕a5+ ♘b6 15.♕e5+ ♕d6 16.♘xd6 ed 17.♕xf4 ♗xh3 18.♕f7+ ♗d7 19.0-0 h5 20.h4. Black has scraped up three minor pieces for his queen, but so far these pieces seem pretty useless (just like his rooks and king).

12. ... c6xd5

13. c2-c4 ♘d7-f6

14. ♕h5-e5+ ...

Yemelin criticized the idea of building a battery along the long diagonal: 14.♗f4+ ♔c6 15.cd+ ♔b7 16.♕f3 ♘xd5 17.♗g2 e6 18.♖c1 ♗d6 – the attack has run out of steam, and White can only

hope that Black will trip up due to the chaos in his own camp. 16... ♕xd5?? 17.♗g2 ♗e6 is refuted by the retreats 18.♕e2 or 18.♕d3.

14. ... ♔d6-c6
15. ♗h3-g2 ♕d8-d6
16. ♗c1-f4 ♔c6-d7
17. c4xd5 ♔d7-e8
18. ♖a1-c1 ♗c8-b7
19. ♖c1-c6!? ...

The continuation 19.♕e2 ♕a6 20.♕xa6 ♗xa6 21.♖c7 ♔d8 22.♔d2 followed by doubling the rooks is objectively just as good, but the rook sortie looks prettier. White attempts to push out his pawns and thereby make his pieces more active.

19. ... ♕d6xe5

Popov links the enemy pawns into a long chain, but he at least avoids facing a dangerous passed pawn that would result after 19...♗xc6 20.dc ♔f7 21.♕b5 ♕e6 22.♗e5.

20. d4xe5 ♘f6-h5?!

Up to this point the Grandmasters from St. Petersburg had skillfully maintained a more or less equal position. Here, however, Black should have swapped the knight for the bishop in a different way – 20... g5! 21.ef gf 22.♖c7 ♖b8 23.0-0 ♔d8 24.d6!? ♗xg2 25.♔xg2 ef.

21. ♖c6-c7 ...

Yemelin suggests 21.♗e3!? ♗xc6 22.dc g6 23.♔e2 – the loss of the rook isn't felt. The move in the text is probably stronger.

21. ... ♘h5xf4
22. g3xf4 ♖a8-b8
23. 0-0?! ...

White abandons the seventh rank without managing to create a passed pawn – which he could have done via 23.e6! ♗c8 24.♖xa7 ♖b7 25.♖xb7 ♗xb7 26.0-0 ♔d8 27.a5 g6 28.♖a1 ♗a6 29.♖a4. It's even worse for Black if he avoids swapping rooks: 23...g6 24.0-0 ♗c8 25.♖fc1 ♔d8 26.a5 b3 (the bishop cannot leave the f8 square due to d5-d6) 27.a6! ♗xa6 28.♖d7+ ♔e8 29.d6! ed 30.♗c6.

23. ... ♖e8-d8
24. ♖f1-c1 ♖b8-c8
25. ♖c7xc8+?! ...

The correct continuation was 25.♖7c4! g6 26.♗h3 ♖xc4 27.♖xc4 b3 28.f3 followed by centralizing the king. The bishop is positioned awkwardly on the long diagonal, unlike on the c8-h3 diagonal.

25. ... ♗b7xc8
26. f4-f5!? g7-g6

It would be interesting to know whether he calculated the line 26...♗xf5!? 27.e6 g6 28.♗f1 ♗g7 29.♗a6 ♗c3 30.♔f1 ♔c7 31.♔e2 ♔d6 32.bc b3 33.♗d3 ♔xd5 34.♗xf5 gf with a rook ending that's probably winning for Black! Anyway, the move played was also good – White has seen better days.

27. f5xg6?! ...

After 27.♖c4 gf 28.♖xb4 ♖g8 29.h3 at least the rook doesn't have any invasion points on the g-file, whereas the opening of the h-file destroys White in just a few moves.

27. ... h7xg6
28. ♖c1-c4 ♗f8-g7

29.	**f2-f4**	**♖h8-h4**
30.	**♗g2-f1**	**♗g7-h6**
31.	**♖c4xb4**	**♖h4xf4**
32.	**♖b4-b8**	**♔d8-c7**
33.	**♖b8-b5**	**♖f4xf1+**

0-1

Therefore, we see that 6.♘f3 promises White a minimal advantage, whereas 6.♘xf7! gives White a tangible initiative and at the same time a guaranteed draw (which is available for just a few moves). Black appears to be able to hold on, but the king's voyage in the center of the board requires exceptional self-control together with deep theoretical knowledge. Whether achieving this result is worth the spent efforts is a matter for the individual player to decide.

Chapter 62. 5...g6. Various White replies

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**d6xe5**
5.	**♘f3xe5**	**g7-g6**



The impulse for developing this line came from Bent Larsen, after he won in great style against Eleazar Jimenez (Palma de Mallorca 1967). The Danish Grandmaster carried out an innovative strategic manoeuvre by exchanging the fianchettoed bishop for a knight – which was as effective as it was spectacular. Subsequently, however, Larsen hardly ever played 5...g6, and the key person in popularizing this fianchetto was Latvian Grandmaster Edvins Kengis.

In Chapters 63 and 64 we consider the main line, 6.♗c4; all the other lines are reviewed under the present chapter.

6. c2-c4 ...

This is clearly the second-most popular line. If White plays 6.♗e2 then he usually follows that up with c2-c4 anyway and transposes back to this line. In the game Salai – Chetverik (Martin 1996) White combined the ideas of ♗f1-e2 and ♘b1-d2: 6...♗g7 7.0-0 c6 8.♘d2 ♘f4!? 9.♗c4 ♗xe5! (as Larsen would have played!) 10.de ♗e6 11.♕f3

♕d4 12.♗xe6 ♘xe6 13.♖e1 ♘d7 14.♘b3 ♕d5 15.♕g3 ♘b6 16.a4?! ♕c4, and the unattractive 17.♕c3 still looks like the best option. Acs versus Cs.Horvath (Balatonlelle 2002) moved his bishop to the long diagonal and in so doing made the standard pawn advance c6-c5 more difficult: 7...0-0 8.♗f3 c6 9.♖e1 ♗f5 10.c3 ♘d7 11.♘xd7 ♕xd7 12.♘a3 b5 13.♘c2 ♗xc2 (13...a5 14.♘e3 ♘xe3 15.♗xe3 a4 is just as good) 14.♕xc2 e6 15.♗g5 ♖ac8 16.♖ad1 a5 17.h4 h6 19.♗c1 c5 20.♕e2. The bishop pair force Black to defend passively.

Much more often the fianchettoed bishop creates pressure along the long diagonal. If 6.g3 ♘d7!? (6...♗g7 7.♗g2 0-0 8.0-0 c6 is more typical in the 5...g6 line; and White has a stable advantage here) 7.♘f3 0-0 8.0-0 c5 Black successfully executes the c7-c5 pawn push in a single move. Glek in his game with Loeffler (Germany 1994) agreed to exchanging the knights. After 7.♗g2 ♘xe5 8.de c6 9.0-0 ♗g7 10.♕e2 h5!? 11.c4 ♘b6 12.♘a3 ♗g4 13.f3 ♗e6 14.f4 ♕c8 15.b3 h4 16.♘c2 hg 17.hg ♗h3 18.♘e3 ♕e6 19.♗b2 0-0-0 20.♖ad1 ♗xg2 21.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 22.♔xg2 the Grandmaster outplayed his less skilled opponent thanks to his spatial advantage and the 'bad' bishop on g7. However, if Black continues 12...♕d4!? 13.♖e1 ♗g4 14.♕c2 then he has the choice between a draw by repetition (14...♗xe5 15.c5 ♗f5 16.♕b3 ♗e6 17.♕c2 ♗f5) and h5-h4 at a good time.

In response to 6.♘d2 it's also useful to attack the centralized knight. After 6...♘d7 7.♘df3 ♘xe5 8.♘xe5 ♗g7 9.c4 ♘b6 10.♗f4 0-0 11.♗e2 c5!? 12.dc ♘d7 13.♘xd7 ♗xd7 14.0-0 ♗c6 15.♗f2 ♗xb2 16.♖b1 ♗d4 17.♖xb7 ♖xb7 18.♗xb7 ♗c5 19.♗xa8 ♕xa8 Black has the better pawn structure (Czebe – Cs.Horvath, Budapest 1997). After 12.d5 Black has twice as many targets in the center as he can attack: 12...g5! 13.♗g3 f5 14.f4 ♕d6! 15.♕b3! (now, 15...gf 16.♗xf4 ♗xe5 is met by check from g3) 15...e6! 16.0-0 ed 17.cd ♗xe5 18.fe ♕xd5 19.♖fc1 ♗e6 with excellent play.

For 6.♕f3, see Game 68.

6. ... ♘d5-b6

The f6 square is generally more appropriate for the knight than b6, but here the priority is to pressurize the c4-d4 pawn pair. After 6...♘f6 7.♘c3 ♗g7 8.♗e2 0-0 9.0-0 ♘bd7 the knight's retreat to f3 leads to a line that's better for White from the previous chapter(5...♘d7 6.♘f3 g6 7.c4 ♘5f6 8.♘c3 ♗g7 9.♗e2 0-0 10.0-0). The change in structure in the game Stellwagen – Blees (Amsterdam 2004) enabled Black to successfully complete his development and end up with equal chances: 10.♗g5 ♘xe5 11.de ♘d7 12.e6 fe 13.♕d3 ♘f6 (13...c5!? 16.♖ad1 ♗d4, eyeing f2) 14.♕e3 c6 15.♘a4 ♕a5 16.♘c5 e5 17.a3 ♕c7

18.♗f3 a5 19.♖ae1 ♘g4 20.♗h6 ♗xh6 21.♕xh6 ♖ad8.

7. ♘b1-c3 ...

If 7.♗e3 ♗g7 8.f4, then Black attacks the center in a way similar to that seen in Game 66: 8...c5! 9.dc (9.♘c3 cd 10.♗xd4 0-0 11.♗e2 ♗f5) 9...♕xd1+ 10.♔xd1 ♘6d7 11.♘d3 ♘a6 12.♘c3 0-0 13.♗e3 ♖d8 14.♔e1 e5 15.fe ♘xe5 16.♘xe5 ♗xe5 17.♔f2 ♗e6 with equal play (Aseev – Kengis, Podolsk 1990).

It is also worth taking a look at 7.c5!?, which was twice tested by Gyula Sax. If the knight is returned to the center, then it will have to be defended with e7-e6, which doesn't combine well with the fianchetto. After 7...♘6d7 8.♘f3 ♗g7 9.♗c4 0-0 10.0-0 b6 11.♘g5 ♗b7 12.♕b3 ♕e8 13.♕h3 h6 (Sax – Maus, Germany 1994) 14.♘xf7! ♖xf7 15.♗xh6 bc 16.dc ♗xb2 17.♕b3 ♗a6 18.♗xf7+ ♕xf7 19.♕xb2 ♗xf1 20.♔xf1 ♘xc5 21.♘c3 White is better. Against Grosar (Maribor 2000) Sax was not adverse to making the effort, but his Croatian opponent wouldn't play ball: 11...♕e8 12.♘c3 ♗b7 13.♖e1 h6 14.♘h3 (14.♘xf7 ♖xf7 15.♘b5 ♘a6 16.♕e2 ♔h8 17.♗xf7 ♕xf7 18.♕xe7 ♕d5) 14...♘c6. White should now have continued 15.♘f4 ♔h8 16.♘b5 ♕c8 17.♗xf7! ♖xf7 18.d5 ♘ce5 19.c6 ♗xc6 20.dc ♘f8 21.♘d4 with a clearly better piece setup.

7. ... ♗f8-g7

8. ♗c1-e3 ...

If White continues 8.♗f4 then the best example for Black to follow is the game between Motwani and Kengis (Vienna 1991) that ended in a draw: 8...0-0 9.♗e2 c6 10.♕d2 ♗e6 11.h3 ♘8d7 12.♕e3 ♘xe5 13.♗xe5 ♗xe5 14.♕xe5 ♘d7 15.♕e3 ♘f6 16.0-0. It's hard for White to play for a win here without compromising his position.

8. ... 0-0

Timothy Taylor considers 8...c5!? to be the simplest way to equalize. He disagrees here with English theoreticians Davies and Cox, claiming they are wrong to see any advantage for White in the line 9.dc ♕xd1+ 10.♖xd1 ♗xe5 11.cb ab 12.♗d4 ♗xd4 13.♖xd4 (Campora – Abreu Suarez, Las Palmas 1993). In reality, after 13...♘c6 14.♖d2 e5 15.♗e2 ♗e6 (which prevents the manoeuvre ♗e2-f3-d5) 16.0-0 ♖d8 17.♖xd8+ ♔xd8 18.b3 ♔c8 19.♖d1 ♘d4 Black's doubled pawns neutralize his opponent's pawn majority, while this wonderful knight has no reason to swap itself for the passive bishop. With the queens kept on the board there still doesn't seem to be any advantage for White. For example, if 9.♕f3 0-0 10.♖d1 ♘6d7 11.♘xd7 ♘xd7 then 12.dc? ♗xc3+ 13.bc ♕a5 is no good for White, while developing 12.♗e2 can lead to 12...♕b6!? (as the b2 pawn can no longer be defended by 13.♕e2) 13.♘d5 (13.b3? ♕a5) 13...♕xb2 14.♘xe7+ ♔h8 15.dc ♘e5 16.♕f4 ♖e8 17.♘d5 ♗f5 with excellent play.

9. ♗f1-e2 ...

As is clear by now, f2-f4 doesn't promise White anything much in the center. The center was soon smashed open in the game Radulski – Milchev (Bulgaria 2012): 9.f4 ♘c6 10.♗e2 ♘xe5 11.fe c5 12.dc ♘d7 13.0-0 ♘xe5 14.♕b3 ♗g4 15.♖ad1 ♕c8 16.♘d5 ♖e8 17.♕c2 ♗xe2 18.♕xe2 ♕g4 19.♕xg4 ♘xg4 20.♗d4 ♖ac8 21.h3 ♗xd4+ 22.♖xd4 ♘e5 with equality. If 10.♘xc6 bc 11.♕d2 a5 12.♗e2 ♗f5 13.0-0 a4 Black's pawn structure is broken but on the other hand he has active pieces.

Cox sees the point of playing 9.♖c1 (Short's move) as being to meet 9...♗e6 not with 10.b3, but with the more active 10.♘e4. This thesis is, however, mistaken, as 10...♗xe5 11.de ♕xd1+ 12.♔xd1 ♘c6 13.f4 f6 14.ef ef is good for Black. The game Grischuk – Baburin (Torshavn 2000) continued 9...c5 10.♗e2 cd 11.♗xd4 ♗h6 12.♖a1 f6 13.♘g4 (13.♘f3 ♘c6 14.♗c5 ♗e6 15.b3 ♘d7 followed by ♕d8-a5) 13...♘xg4 14.♗xg4 ♘c6 15.♗c5 ♘e5 16.♗e6+ ♔d7 17.♘d5 ♘xd5 18.cd ♕a5+ 19.b4 ♕a6 20.♕e2, and 20...♕xe2+ 21.♔xe2 ♘f7 22.♗xe7 ♖fe8 23.♗c5 ♘d8 or 23.♗xf7 ♔xf7 24.d6 ♗f8 lead to drawing simplifications. According to Cox, more reliable continuations are 15...f5 16.♗e2 ♕xd1+ 17.♖xd1 ♗g7 18.♗f3 ♖fd8 or 18...♗xc3+ 19.bc ♘a4. Grischuk suggests that White can seek an advantage with 16.♗f3!? ♘e5 17.0-0 ♖c8 18.b4 ♕xd1 19.♗xd1 ♘bxc4 20.♗b3, but it's more accurate for Black to play 17...♕xd1 18.♗xd1 ♘bxc4, without immediately determining what to do with his rook.

9. ... ♗c8-e6

See also the fragment Stefansson – Bofill (Vlissingen 2005): 9...♘6d7 10.f4 (10.♘f3 is more promising) 10...c5 11.♘xd7 ♘xd7 12.dc ♕a5 13.0-0 ♗xc3 14.bc ♘c6 15.♕d5 b6 16.♗d4 ♗e6 17.♕e5 f6 18.♕e3 ♖fe8 19.♔h1 ♕a6 20.♗f3 ♖ac8 21.♗xc6 bc 22.♗d5 ♗xd5 23.cd and White has no advantage whatsoever. **So we conclude that in the Larsen-Kengis line Black should move his pawn to c5 in response to White playing f4 as an automatic reflex.**

10. b2-b3 c7-c5

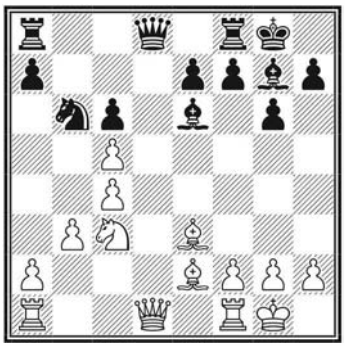
11. 0-0 ...

It's obviously useful to push the pawn to c5 as soon as convenient. After 11.♖c1 cd 12.♗xd4 f6 13.♘f3 ♘c6 14.0-0 ♗h6 15.♗e3 ♗xe3 16.fe ♗f7 17.♘d4 ♘e5 18.♕c2 ♖c8 19.♘db5 a6 20.♖fd1 ♘bd7 21.♘d4 ♕a5 (Bryzgalin – Orlinkov, St. Petersburg 2002) Black's pieces have taken up reasonable positions, but they just stand there and don't make any progress. By castling, Black is able to take advantage of White's hanging knight on c3.

11. ... ♘b8-c6

12. ♘e5xc6 b7xc6

13. d4xc5 ...



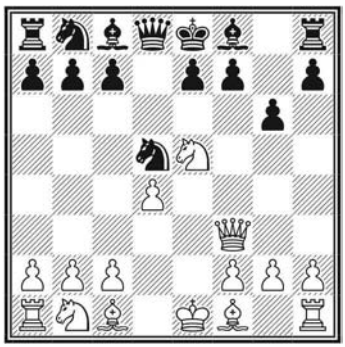
After 13...♗xc3 14.bc ab 15.♖c1 ♗f6 16.a4 White is marginally better. However, if Black instead plays 13...♘xc4! then White must tread carefully. Wohl against Segers (Leiden 2009) won a pawn and gained an excellent position: 14.bc ♗xc3 15.♖c1?! ♕a5 16.♕d3?! (16.♕c2) 16...♗b2 17.♖cd1 ♗f5 18.♕b3 ♖ad8 19.♗d2 ♕c5 20.♕a4 ♗d4. Instead, White should have swapped queens and contented himself with equality: 14.♗xc4 ♗xc4 15.bc ♗xc3 16.♖c1 ♕xd1 17.♖fxd1 ♖fd8 18.g3 ♗b4 19.♔g2 ♔f8 20.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 21.♖b1 a5 (N.Guliyev – Dobrev, Sautron 2004).

Game 68

A.Dgebuadze – M.Chetverik

Metz 2013

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**d6xe5**
5.	**♘f3xe5**	**g7-g6**
6.	**♕d1-f3**	**...**



Just as blunt as it gets! However, McMahon (with an ELO rating of 2205!) against Barua (Gausdal 1986) decided it was time to protect his knight and played 6...c6 !

6. ... ♗c8-e6

Advancing with 6...f6 is actually better than its reputation. After 7.♗c4 c6 8.♘d3 ♘b6 9.♗b3 ♕xd4 10.♗e3 ♕g4 11.♕xg4 ♗xg4 12.♘c5 ♗c8 13.♘c3 White has good play for the pawn but nothing concrete. Dimitrov when playing Janev (Sofia 1992) preferred 7.♘d3 ♘c6 8.c3 ♗g7 9.g3 0-0 10.♗g2 ♘b6 11.0-0 e5 12.de ♘xe5 13.♘xe5 fe 14.♕e2 ♗f5 15.♖d1 ♕c8 16.♘d2 ♖d8 17.♘e4 ♕e6 18.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 19.♗g5, and due to the threat of ♘e4-c5 Black is probably forced to play the unfortunate 19...♗xe4 20.♕xe4 ♖b8. Black was too slow in attacking the center; if 8...e5 9.de fe 10.♕g3 ♕f6 the activity of Black's pieces compensates for his extra pawn island.

7. ♗c1-d2 ...

7.♗c4 c6 is considered in Chapter 65 (Game 71). 7.c4 ♘b4 8.♕xb7 leads to a draw if both players play accurately. One such version is: 8...♕xd4 9.♕xa8 ♘c2+ 10.♔e2 ♕xe5+ 11.♔d1 ♘xa1 (11...♕d4+?! 12.♗d2 ♘xa1 13.♕b8+ ♔d7 14.c5!) 12.♕b8+ ♔d7 13.♕xa7 ♗f5 14.♘a3 e6 15.♕a4+ ♔d8 16.♗e2 ♕d4+ 17.♗d2 ♕xb2 18.♕a8+ ♔e7 19.♕a5 ♔d8 20.♕a8+.

Dgebuadze prevents the knight from moving to b4, and the threat of c2-c4 becomes dangerous. On the other hand, the bishop's move here is hardly conducive to the harmonious development of the white pieces.

7. ... c7-c6
8. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6

Following more general rules the knight is better on f6, but given that 8...♘f6 9.♕b3 ♕b6 10.♘c3 ♗g7 11.♗e2 is pleasant for White, Black instead choses to protect the vulnerable b7 pawn.

9. ♕f3-e3 ♗f8-g7
10. b2-b3 ♘b8-d7
11. f2-f4 ...

Subsequently, White's lack of development comes back to haunt him. Therefore, he should have preferred 11.♗e2. Nevertheless, 11...♘xe5 12.de ♘d7 13.f4 ♕b6 14.♘c3 ♕xe3 15.♗xe3 g5! 16.g3 gf 17.gf ♘f8 leaves Black with a solid and equal position.

11. ... c6-c5!
12. ♗d2-c3 c5xd4
13. ♗c3xd4 ♘d7xe5
14. ♗d4xe5 ♗g7xe5

Given that Larsen wasn't afraid of swapping his bishop for the knight he was more than happy to swap it for another bishop. Black starts to dream of gaining an advantage.

15. ♕e3xe5 0-0
16. ♗f1-e2 ♘b6-d7
17. ♕e5-e3 ♕d8-a5
18. ♘b1-c3 b7-b5!
19. c4xb5 ♗e6xb3

When calculating the variation 19...♖fc8 20.♖c1 ♖c7 21.0-0 ♖ac8 22.♘a4 ♖xc1 23.♖xc1 at the board I missed 23...♖c2!! Nevertheless, even then the game remains equal: 24.♗f1 ♖xa2 25.♖c8+ ♔g7 26.♖a8 ♕b4 27.♖xa7 ♖a3 28.♖c7 ♖xb3 29.♘c3 ♘f6.

20. 0-0 ♗b3-e6
21. ♘c3-e4 ♕a5-b6
22. ♕e3-f2 ♖f8-c8
23. a2-a4 ♖c8-c2
24. a4-a5 ♕b6xf2+

The overture to a fatal error. After 25...♕b7 26.♕e3 ♖ac8 White has no advantage whatsoever.

25. ♖f1xf2 ♗e6-c4?

Or maybe even two question-marks. 25...♖b8 26.♗f1 ♖c7 would have required Black to play accurately, but there would have been nothing terrible about that.

26. ♗e2-f3 ♖c2xf2
27. ♘e4xf2 ♖a8-b8
28. b5-b6! a7xb6
29. a5-a6 ...

So Black now has to give up

a piece to stop the passed pawn. Predictably, the Grandmaster's technique didn't betray him.

29.	**...**	**♗c4xa6**
30.	**♖a1xa6**	**♘d7-c5**
31.	**♖a6-a7**	**e7-e6**
32.	**♘f2-g4**	**♔g8-g7**
33.	**♘g4-e5**	**♖b8-f8**
34.	**♖a7-c7**	**h7-h6**
35.	**h2-h4**	**♔g7-f6**
36.	**♔g1-f2**	**g6-g5**
37.	**♖c7xc5!**	**b6xc5**
38.	**♘e5xd7+**	**♔f6-e7**
39.	**♘d7xf8**	**♔e7xf8**
40.	**h4xg5**	**h6xg5**
41.	**f4xg5**	**f7-f6**
42.	**g5xf6**	**♔f8-f7**
43.	**♔f2-e3**	**♔f7xf6**
44.	**♔e3-f4**	**c5-c4**
45.	**♔f4-e4**	**♔f6-g5**
46.	**♔e4-d4**	**♔g5-f4**
47.	**♔d4xc4**	**♔f4-e3**
48.	**♔c4-c5**	**e6-e5**
49.	**♔c5-d5**	**♔e3-f4**
50.	**♗f3-e4**	

1-0

Avoiding 6.♗c4 doesn't hence cause Black any problems, providing that Black can counter the more aggressive 6.c4 ♘b6 7.c5!? There haven't been sufficient games played to enable a definitive evaluation of how strong White's initiative is.

Chapter 63. 6.♗c4 ♗e6

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**d6xe5**
5.	**♘f3xe5**	**g7-g6**
6.	**♗f1-c4**	**...**



This active bishop developing move accounts for the vast majority of games in this line. After Black has fianchettoed his bishop the move e7-e6 to counter the white bishop's reach clearly weakens Black's position.

6. ... ♗c8-e6

Black sets up a piece barrier along the a2-g8 diagonal and hopes to swap bishops. Continuing 6... c6 without playing ♗c8-e6 in the next few moves is considered in the following chapter.

Caution! The automatic 6...♗g7?! is met by 7.♘xf7! Black captures the d4 pawn but the variations 7...

♔xf7 8.♕f3+ ♔e8 9.♕xd5 ♕xd5 10.♗xd5 ♗xd4 11.c3 c6 12.♗b3 ♗f6 13.♗e3 ♗f5 14.0-0 and 9.♗xd5 ♖f8 10.♕b3 c6 11.♗f3 ♕xd4 12.0-0 ♕b6 13.♕a3 (Ramesh – Mishra, India 2000) leave him with a ruined pawn structure and a king stuck in the center. Godena versus Kveinys (Debrecen 1992) castled instead of playing the sac, and the game patiently continued along well-trodden paths. However, it's possible that it was recorded in the Megabase with an incorrect move order.

7. ♘b1-c3 ...

Bagirov assigned an exclamation-mark to this knight sortie. But the quantity and quality of alternatives is nothing to write home about. Game 69 considers 7.♗b3, while Game 70 analyzes 7.0-0.

7. ... ♗f8-g7

7...c6 8.♕f3 ♗g7 leads to the main line via a different move order. Instead of 8...♗g7 Krasenkow versus Wurdinger (Bad Wiessee 1999) preferred 8...♘d7 9.♘xd5 ♘xe5 10.de ♗d5 11.♗xd5 ♕xd5 12.♕xd5 cd 13.♗e3 b5 14.a4 b4 15.♗xf8 ♖xf8. Faced with playing a Grandmaster, the amateur went for a simplifying, drawing strategy. Ultimately, he predictably failed to get a result, but at this point he still had equality. He could have aimed higher with 9.0-0 ♗g7 10.♖e1, leading back to the main line.

7...c6 can be met with the principled 8.♘e4, and the thematic exchange of bishops would provoke a flurry of activity otherwise untypical of this variation: 8...♘c7 9.♗xe6 ♘xe6 10.♕f3! f6 11.♕b3 ♕d5 (11...♕c8 12.♘f3 is unattractive for Black) 12.♕xb7 ♕xe4+ 13.♗e3 ♗g7? 14.♕xa8?! fe 15.♕xb8+ ♔f7 16.♕b4 ♕xg2 (16...c5!? 17.♕a4 ♕xg2 18.0-0-0 cd is fairly unclear) 17.0-0-0 ed 18.♗d2 ♕d5 19.♕b3 ♔d8 20.♖de1 c5 21.♕xd5 ♖xd5, and the centralization and pawn compensate for the exchange to a certain degree (Godena – Vaganian, Reggio Emilia 1995). However, Vaganian's move order is bad due to 14.♘d3! The correct continuation was 13...fe 14.♕xa8 ♕xg2 15.0-0-0 ed 16.♗d2 ♗g7 17.♕xb8+ ♔f7 18.♕b3 ♖d8 19.♖de1 ♕d5 20.♕xd5 ♖xd5 (Erdelyi – Chetverik, Budapest 2005). White has gained an insignificant tempo (♕b8-b3 in a single move) and at the same time has prevented Black from playing c6-c5xd4.

After 7...c6 8.♘e4 f6 9.♘d3! the exchange of bishops is also good for White: 9...♘c3 10.bc ♗xc4 11.0-0 ♕a5 12.♖e1 ♔f7 13.♕f3 or 9...♘e3 10.♗xe3 ♗xc4 11.0-0 ♗g7 12.b3 ♗f7 13.♖e1 0-0 14.c3. The continuation 8...♗g7 9.♘g5 ♕a5+ 10.♕d2 ♕xd2+ 11.♗xd2 ♗xe5 12.♘xe6 ♗d6 13.♘g5 ♘d7 accurately equalizes chances.

8. ♕d1-f3 ...

In the European Championships – a serious tournament after all – Motylev versus Godena (Budva

2009) chose a risky strategy: 8.♘e4 f6!? 9.♘c5 ♗g8 10.♘ed3 b6 11.♘b3 ♘c3?! 12.♕f3! ♗xc4 13.♕xa8 ♘d5 14.♘d2 (if 14.♕xa7 ♘c6 15.♕a3 the bishop adopts a position to ambush the enemy after 15...♗f8!) 14...♗xd3 15.cd a5. The white queen has got stuck in the enemy camp, but with the help of 16.♘f3 c6 17.♗d2 0-0 18.♖b1!? (and then b2-b4) White manages to extract the poor bugger. Black can improve on this with 11...♕d7!? 12.♕e2 ♕c6!, taking control of the light squares.

Bagirov recommends following Larsen's analysis here: 8...♗xe5 9.de ♘c6 10.♘c5 ♘e3 11.♗xe3 ♗xc4 12.b3 b6 13.bc bc 14.♗xc5 ♘xe5 15.♗d4 f6 16.♗xe5 ♕xd1+ 17.♖xd1 fe with pretentions to draw. It's better not to play 14.♗xc5, or 14.f4 ♕xd1+ 15.♖xd1 (as was played in the short game Godena – Borgo, Italy 1990), but 14.♕f3 ♘xe5 15.♕e4 f6 16.♖d1 ♕c8 17.f4 ♘f7 18.♗xc5 with a tangible initiative. 10...♘f4!? 11.♗xf4 ♗xc4 12.b3 ♗e6 13.♕xd8+ ♘xd8 is sufficiently reliable for Black.

Krizsany and Videki recommend 10.b3 with the convincing continuation 10...♘xe5(?) 11.♗b2 f6 12.♗xe5 fe 13.♘c5 ♗f7 14.♘xb7 ♕d7 15.0-0 ♕c6 16.♘a5 ♕c5 17.♗xd5! ♗xd5 18.b4 ♕d6 19.c4 ♗e4 (Vlasak – Pletanek, correspondence game, 1990) 20.♕a4+ ♔f7 21.♖fe1 – here White can definitely liquidate the e5 pawn and destroy his opponent's defenses. If, however, Black adopts the correct 10...♘db4! 11.♗xe6 fe 12.♗b2 ♕xd1+ 13.♔xd1 0-0-0+ 14.♔c1 ♖hf8, then White doesn't have any advantage.

8. ... c7-c6

After 8...♗xe5!? 9.de ♘b4 10.♗xe6 ♘xc2+ 11.♔f1 fe 12.♕xb7 ♘d7 13.♖b1 ♖b8 14.♕e4 ♘b4 15.♗e3 c6 16.♗xa7 ♖b7 17.♗d4 ♕a5?! 18.g3 ♘xa2 19.♕xc6 (Maros – M.Horvath, Martin 1996) Black should have looked to the endgame to save himself – 19...♘xc3 20.♕xb7 ♘xb1 21.♕c8+ ♕d8 22.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 23.♔e2 ♔c7 24.♖xb1. Nevertheless, Black is not forced to avoid complications: instead of 17...♕a5?! he could have played the stronger 17...♘d5, while instead of the pawn sacrifice the continuation 15...♕c8!? 16.a3 ♕a6+ 17.♔g1 ♘d3 deserves to be tested.

9. 0-0 ...

9.♘e4?! ♘d7?! 10.♘xd7 ♕xd7 11.♘c5 ♕d6 12.c3 b6 13.♘e4 ♕d7 14.0-0 leads to a slight, general advantage for White. However, Black can change the structure and gain the initiative: 9...♗xe5! 10.de ♘d7 11.♕g3 ♕c7 12.f4 ♕b6 13.♗b3 ♘c5 14.♘xc5 ♕xc5 15.♗d2 ♗f5 16.♕f2 ♕xf2+ 17.♔xf2 0-0-0 18.h3 ♗e6 (Norgaard – Nijboer, Copenhagen 1982), while he could have increased his advantage with 13...♗f5 14.♘f2 ♘c5.

9. ... 0-0

Now there is no justification to carry out an exchange Larsen-style, as the pawn on e5 is defended by the rook without weakening the dark squares. Panchenko, as Black, outplayed Sherzer (Chicago 1992) after 9...♘d7 10.♖d1 ♗xe5 11.♗xd5 ♗xd5 12.♘xd5 ♗g7 13.♘e3 0-0 14.d5 (this strengthens the powers of Black's bishop, which is dubious here in particular and in the system in general) 14... ♘e5 15.♕g3 ♕b6 16.a4?! ♖ad8 17.dc ♕xc6 18.♗d2 ♘c4 19.♘xc4 ♕xc4. The continuation 10.♖e1 (instead of 10.♖d1) is considered below.

10. ♖f1-e1 ♘b8-d7

The immediate exchange of bishops is also fine. In the variation 10...♘c7 11.♕e4 ♗xc4 12.♘xc4 ♕xd4 13.♕xd4 ♗xd4 14.♖xe7 ♘ba6 the rook cannot cement its position behind enemy lines and White has no obvious advantage.

11. ♗c4-b3 ...

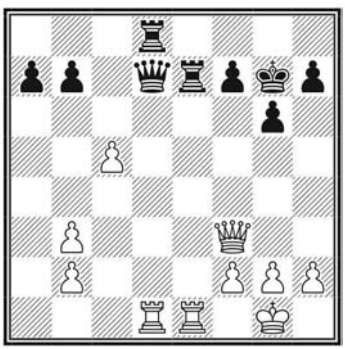
White retreats his bishop to a defended square and at the same time protects the c2 square. After 11.♕g3(?!) ♘xe5 12.de ♘xc3 (12...♘b4 13.♗b3 ♕a5 14.f4 ♖ad8 15.♖d1 ♘xd3 16.cd f6! 17.ef ef is even better) 13.♕xc3 ♗xc4 14.♕xc4 ♕d5 15.♕e2 ♖ad8 16.♗g5 ♕e6 17.♕e3 b6 18.a4 ♖d5 19.♗f4 ♕f5 20.♕e4 ♕d7 21.c3 ♖d8 22.h3 ♕e6 Black has got a good grip on the open line and is already better. Amazingly, this was all played by Nepomniachtchi and Carlsen in the Under-12 European Championships (Peniscola 2002).

11. ... ♘d5-c7

12. ♗c1-g5 ...

Shliahtin gained a clear advantage against Donchenko (Smolensk 1991) after 12.♕g3 ♗xb3 13.ab ♘e6 14.♗e3 f5 15.f4 ♘f6 16.♖ad1 ♘c7 17.♕f3 ♘cd5 18.♘a4 e6?! 19.c4 ♘e7 20.♘c5 ♕c8 21.♗f2 b6 22.♘cd3 a5 23.♗h4 ♕c7 24.♘f2 ♖ad8 25.♕e3. But if Black hadn't given up his key defensive post (and instead played 18...♘e4 19.c4 ♘df6), then he would have been fine.

12. ... ♗e6xb3
13. a2xb3 ♘c7-e6
14. ♘e5xd7 ♕d8xd7
15. ♗g5-e3 ♘e6xd4
16. ♗e3xd4 ♗g7xd4
17. ♖a1-d1 c6-c5
18. ♘c3-d5 ♖a8-d8
19. ♘d5xe7+ ♔g8-g7
20. c2-c3 ♖f8-e8
21. c3xd4 ♖e8xe7
22. d4xc5 ...



Here we have followed the game

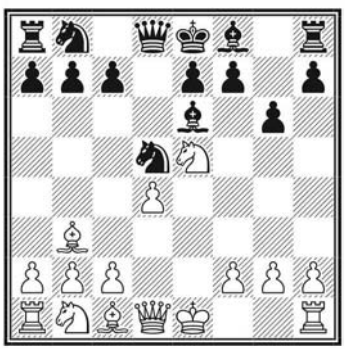
Martin Gonzalez against Abreu Suarez (Spain 1994). Up to now Black has played accurately, but here he blundered: 22...♕d2? 23.♖f1 ♕a5 24.b4 ♕c7 25.♖xd8 ♕xd8 (with no compensation for the pawn). But the more modest queen invasion 22...♕d3! would have practically ensured a draw (23.♖f1 ♕xf3 24.gf ♖c8 25.b4 ♖e2 26.♖b1 a5).

Game 69

R.Mainka – M.Chetverik

Travemuende 2013

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**d6xe5**
5.	**♘f3xe5**	**g7-g6**
6.	**♗f1-c4**	**♗c8-e6**
7.	**♗c4-b3**	**...**



Here the bishop has a much more stable square, while after c2-c3 it can move to c2. The loss of time isn't so important, as statics take priority over dynamics in the Larsen-Kengis variation.

7. ... ♗f8-g7

Movsesian only overcame the resistance of Bozinovic, despite the latter being rated more than 400 ELO points below him, on the 65th move (Biel 2012): 7...c6 8.♘d2 ♘d7 9.♘d3 ♗g7 10.c3 ♗f5 11.♘f3 ♕c7 12.0-0 0-0 13.♖e1 ♗xd3 14.♕xd3 e6 15.♗g5 a5 16.a4 ♖fe8 17.♗h4 ♘e7 18.♗g3 ♕b6 19.♕c2 ♘f5 20.♗f4 ♘f6 21.♘e5 ♘d5 22.♗g5 ♕c7 23.♘d3 h6 24.♗d2 ♖ad8, and White's advantage was insignificant for a long time. Note that Black could have probably fully equalized with the help of 19...c5!?

8. ♘e5-f3 ...

Larsen's victory against Jimenez was widely acclaimed (Palma de Mallorca 1967): 8.0-0 0-0 9.♕e2 a5 10.♘c3 c6 11.♘xd5? cd 12.a4 ♘c6 13.c3 ♕b6 14.♗a2 ♗xe5! 15.de d4! 16.♗h6 ♖fd8 17.♗xe6 fe 18.♖fe1 ♖d5 19.♗f4 ♖f8 20.g3 ♖f5 and Black had a clear advantage thanks to his piece setup. Exchanging the fianchettoed bishop half a century ago was quite an eye-opener, whereas today it has become a standard manoeuvre based on the principle of liquidating the opponent's strongest piece. Obviously, strong chess players won't repeat Jimenez's mistake and won't allow their opponent to strengthen the center with ♘b8-c6.

8. ... c7-c6

The standard bishop for knight

swap followed by e7-e6 is also seen in the game Psakhis against Vaganian (Rostov on Don 1993): 8...0-0 9.0-0 ♗g4 10.♘bd2 a5 11.a3 c6 12.h3 ♗xf3 13.♘xf3 e6 14.♗g5 ♘e7 15.♕d2 ♘d7 16.♖fe1 ♖e8 17.h4 ♘f6 18.c3 ♕b6 19.♗a2 ♘f5 20.h5 c5 21.h6 ♗h8 22.♕f4 cd!? 23.g4 ♘xg4 24.♕xg4 dc 25.bc ♗xc3 26.♖cb1 ♕c5. Here, White is best to continue 27.♖ec1 ♕xa3 28.♖xb7 ♖ac8 29.♗b1, and in the resulting position the piece is somewhat stronger than the three pawns. Given that after 22.dc!? ♕xc5 23.♖ad1 White's advantage is felt more keenly, Black should try 20...gh 21.♗xf6 ♕xf6 22.♘e5 ♕d8 instead of 20...c5.

9. ♘b1-d2 0-0
10. 0-0 ♘d5-c7
11. c2-c3 ♗e6xb3
12. ♕d1xb3 b7-b6

The drawback of exchanging bishops is that b7 is a weakness. Given that Black's queen eventually ends up on c8 anyway he should now have gone for 12...♕c8 13.♖e1 ♘e6 14.♘f1 ♗f6 (here the bishop simultaneously protects e7 and g5).

13. ♖f1-e1 ♘b8-d7

13...♘e6 is rejected because of 14.♖xe6!? This is a typical exchange sac on e6 in such positions. Grischuk skillfully implemented this idea in Game 69, whereas here it only happens off-screen. A logical continuation would be 14...fe 15.♕xe6+ ♔h8 16.♘e4 ♕d7 17.♘eg5 ♕xe6 18.♘xe6 ♖e8 19.♗f4 ♘a6 20.♘d2 ♗f6 and Black's pieces look ugly, although his position is still quite solid.

14. ♘d2-c4 ♘c7-d5
15. ♘c4-e5 ♘d7xe5

The 'Larsen' exchange 15... ♗xe5 is risky due to 16.de ♘c5 17.♕c4 ♕c7 18.♕h4. In fact this is the same manoeuvre that Mainka carried out in the game.

16. d4xe5 ♕d8-c8
17. ♕b3-c4 ♖f8-d8
18. ♕c4-h4 f7-f6

In the variation 18...e6 19.♘g5 h6 20.♘e4 ♕c7 21.♗xh6 ♗xh6 22.♕xh6 ♕xe5 23.♘g5 ♕f6 the dark squares are more or less defended, but Black's position remains tough. The move played provoked complications much earlier than could have been expected.



19. ♗c1-h6!? ...

Only White's lagging behind in development prevents him from claiming an obvious advantage. Bringing the queen's rook into the game is best achieved with

19.♗d2, whereas the sacrifice made makes the game's outcome totally unpredictable.

19. ... g6-g5
20. ♘f3xg5 ♗g7xh6
21. e5xf6! e7xf6
22. ♕h4xh6 f6xg5
23. ♖e1-e5?! ...

The Grandmaster has been careless in calculating the variations and as a result chose a poor move. An OK continuation would have been perpetual check with 23.♕xg5+ ♔f7 24.♕h5+ ♔g8 25.♕g5+, whereas 23.c4! ♕f5 24.cd cd 25.♖e7 ♕g6 26.♕xg6+ hg would have left Black fighting for a draw in the rook ending. Anyway, a passed pawn in an otherwise drawish rook endgame is always a cause for cautious optimism.

23. ... ♕c8-c7
24. ♖a1-e1 ♘d5-f4

24...♕f7, 24...♔h8 and especially 24...♖f7 are all more precise than the move played, which gave White the chance to force a draw.

25. ♕h6-g5+?! ...

In time trouble Mainka failed to spot the little exchange combination and got caught in a web. 25.♖xg5+ ♘g6 26.f4 ♕d6 27.f5 ♖e8 28.♖f1 ♕c5+ 29.♔h1 ♕f2! 30.♖xg6+ was correct.

25. ... ♘f4-g6
26. g2-g3 ♖d8-d1!
27. ♔g1-g2 ♖d1xe1
28. ♖e5xe1 ♕c7-d8
29. ♕g5-g4 ♕d8-d5+
30. ♔g2-g1 ♖a8-f8
31. h2-h4 ♔g8-h8

The game's consolidation is over and it's time for White to swap queens with 32.♕e4. It's hard to be sure that White can draw here, but accurately setting up his kingside pawns (and h2-h4 was a move in the wrong direction) he would have had chances to hold on. But with queens still on the board this was impossible.

32. ♕g4-e2?? ♘g6xh4!
0-1

Game 70
A.Grischuk – A.Riazantsev
Moscow 2009

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 d6xe5
5. ♘f3xe5 g7-g6
6. ♗f1-c4 ♗c8-e6
7. 0-0 ...



This is more flexible than 7.♗b3; White can't do without castling in

any case. The subsequent ♖f1-e1 frees up the f1 square for the bishop.

7. ... ♗f8-g7

8. ♖f1-e1 ...

The setup with ♕e2 + ♖d1 justified itself in the game Garakov – Chetverik (Sukhumi 2006): 8.♕e2 0-0 9.♗b3 c6 10.♖d1 a5 11.c4 ♘c7?! 12.♘c3 ♘d7 13.♘f3 ♗g4 14.♗e3 ♖e8 15.h3 ♗xf3 16.♕xf3 ♕c8 17.♖ac1 ♘e6 18.♘a4 ♖b8 19.c5! with a clear advantage. Black could have highlighted the drawbacks of playing c4 with the help of 11...♘b6 (12.♗f4? a4 13.♗c2 ♗xe5! 14.de ♗xc4!).

Centralizing the queen's knight failed to bring any opening advantage for Collas in his game with Therkildsen (Aix les Bains 2007): 8.♘d2 c6 9.♘e4 ♘c7 10.♗e2 ♗xe5 11.de ♕d5 12.♕xd5 cd 13.♘c5 ♗c8 14.♘b3 b6 15.♖e1 ♘c6 16.f4 ♗a6. If 12.♘g5!? ♕xe5 13.♖e1 ♕f6 14.♘xe6 ♘xe6 15.♗g4 White has more than sufficient compensation for the pawn. Therefore, 11...♗f5 is more accurate, and in response to c2-c4 Black should exchange queens.

8. ... 0-0

Schroll versus Popovic (Austria 2008) held back from castling to instead hasten the bishop swap. The Serbian Grandmaster made use of the freed up f1 square (as mentioned above): 8...c6 9.♘d2 ♘d7 10.♘ef3 ♘c7 11.♗f1 0-0 12.h3 c5 13.♘b3 ♗xb3 14.ab cd 15.♘xd4 ♘c5 16.♘f3 ♕xd1 17.♖xd1 a6 18.♗e3 ♘5e6 19.c3 ♖fd8 20.♗b6 ♔f8 21.♗c4 ♖d6 22.♖xd6 ed 23.♖d1 ♔e7 24.♘g5 ♘xg5 25.♗xc7 ♗e5 26.♗b6 with the tangible advantage of the bishop pair. 15...e6 would have been stronger in order to move the knight back to d5.

9. ♘b1-d2 ...

The position after 9.♗b3 c6 usually occurs after 6.♗c4 c6 7.0-0 ♗g7 8.♖e1 0-0 9.♗b3 ♗e6. Even that most temperamental of players, GM Topalov, continued here is the unhurried manner typical of this variation. For example, 10.c3 ♘d7 11.♘f3 ♗g4 12.♘bd2 e6 13.h3 ♗xf3 14.♘xf3 a5 15.♗g5 ♕c7 16.a4 ♖fe8 17.♗h4 ♘7f6 18.♗g3 ♕e7 19.♘e5 ♘h5 20.♗h2 ♗h6 21.♕f3 ♕f6 22.♕xf6 ♘hxf6 with a draw several moves later (Topalov – Ivanchuk, Monaco 2002 rapid game). Topalov eventually outplayed the much weaker Costa-Rican Arias (Khanty-Mansiysk 2010), but after 11.♘d3 (preventing the pin, and this is a signal to exchange the light-squared bishops) 11...♘c7 12.♗g5 ♖e8 13.♘d2 a5 14.♘e4 h6 15.♗h4 ♕c8 16.♘ec5 ♘xc5 17.♘xc5 ♗xb3 18.ab ♘d5 19.♗g3 b6 20.♘d3 ♕f5 21.♕e2 ♖ac8 White's advantage was minimal.

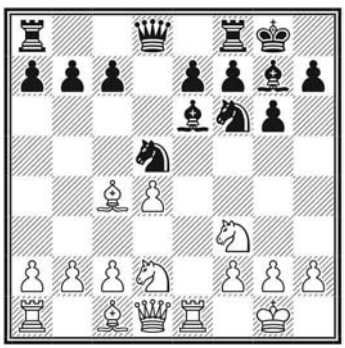
9. ... ♘b8-d7

Caution! Reducing the tension with 9...♘f4?! doesn't work due to 10. ♕f3! ♗xc4?! (it's better to return the knight to d5) 11. ♘dxc4 ♘d5 12. ♘a5! This was seen in the games Korneev – Jung (Metz 1995)

and van der Weide – Chetverik (Bad Ems 2006). And there's a tragi-comic fact: the commander of the black army in the second game knew about the previous game and repeated the mistakes of the first game without thinking! And this happened right under the watchful eyes of victim number 1, Karl Otto Jung, the organizer of the Bad Ems tournament!

10. ♘e5-f3 ♘d7-f6

Obviously, Riazantsev had anticipated White's reply, but he had not considered it particularly dangerous. 10...♘f4!? (Mikhalchishin) in this changing situation is quite acceptable, as is 10...♘7b6!? (to avoid locking in the bishop on g7).



11. ♖e1xe6!? ...

This is a positional decision, which doesn't lead to any immediate gains but it enables White to look optimistically ahead due to the activity of his pieces, his spatial advantage and, in particular, his better pawn structure. According to Bagirov: "White played more accurately in the game Unzicker – Williams (Buenos Aires 1978): 11.♗f1! c6 12.c4 ♘c7 13.b3 b5? 14.♗a3 b5 15.♘e5 b4 16.♗b2 with long-lasting positional pressure. Usually, the bishop moves to b3, and it will be exchanged sooner or later, but bringing it back to f1 is very promising." The game continued 16...♗d7 17.g3 ♘e6 18.♗g2 ♖c8 19.♘df3 ♖c7 20.a3 ♕b8 21.ab cb 22.♘d3 ♖d8 23.♕d2 with a winning position. This, however, had nothing to do with the bishop retreat; Williams messed up his position himself, starting with 13... b5? (instead of 13...♗g4).

11. ... f7xe6
12. ♘f3-g5 ♕d8-d6
13. ♕d1-e1 b7-b5?!

The strong Grandmaster repeats Williams' error, as a result of which Grischuk launches an energetic attack on the queenside. Mikhalchishin's variation 13...c6 14.♘df3 b5 15.♗b3 ♘c7 16.♗xe6+ ♘xe6 17.♘xe6 ♖fc8 18.♗f4 with an advantaged is also based on the pseudo-active move b7-b5. Wouldn't it be better to prepare a reciprocal exchange sac with 14... ♘e8!? (which immediately opens up two files that can be exploited) 15.♘xe6 ♖f6 16.♘c5 ♖xf3! 17.gf ♗xd4 18.♘xb7 ♕f6 with real counterplay!?

14. ♗c4-b3 ...

After 14.♗xb5 the bishop has been tempted off the a2-g8 diagonal, and

Black gains the tactical chance 14... ♘g4!? 15.♕xe6+ ♕xe6 16.♘xe6 ♖xf2 17.h3 ♖f6 18.♘xg7 c6 19.♘e4 cb 20.♘xf6+ ef 21.hg ♔xg7. His good knight will probably let him withstand the attack.

14. ... a7-a5

15. a2-a4! b5xa4?!

And this exchange too benefits White. The prophylactic 15...♔h8 (running away from the strafed diagonal!) looks a useful move given the upcoming complications: 16.ab ♘g4 17.♘df3 ♗xd4 18.♕xe6 ♗xf2+ 19.♔h1 ♘de3, 16.♘xe6 ♘g4 17.♘f3 ♖xf3!? 18.gf ♕xh2+ 19.♔f1 ♕h3+ 20.♔e2 ♘gf6 21.♘g5 ♕d7 or 16.♕xe6 ♘f4 17.♕e1 ♘g4 18.g3 h6 19.♘de4 ♕xd4 20.gf h6 21.♕e2 ♘xf2 22.♘xf2 gf.

16. ♘d2-c4 ♕d6-c6

17. ♖a1xa4 ♖a8-a6

18. ♖a4xa5 ...

Mikhalchishin recommends re-jigging his position and strengthening his bishop: 18.♘e5 ♕b6 19.♗c4 ♖a7 20.♘d3 ♕c6 21.b3.

18. ... ♖f8-a8

19. ♗c1-d2 ...

19.♖c5 ♕d7 20.♘e5 ♕d6 21.h4 was also worth considering, preventing the exchange of the passive bishop on g7.

19. ... ♗g7-h6

20. h2-h4 ♗h6xg5

21. h4xg5 ♘f6-d7

After 21...♘h5 22.♖c5 ♕d7 23.♘e5 ♕d6 24.♕e4 (Mikhalchishin) White is ready to chase the knight from d5 by playing c2-c4, as the knight has been guarding f4. Black should nevertheless have gone for this line and then brought the h5 knight via g7 to f5.

22. ♖a5xa6?! ...

Mikhalchishin gives the continuation 22.♗a4 ♕xc4 23.♗xd7 ♔f7 24.♗b5 ♖xa5 25.♗xc4 ♖a1 26.♗c1 but without any assessment. Black liquidates the pinned bishop, but his position remains tough, above all due to his bad king. This is amply illustrated in the continuation 26... ♖b1 27.♔h2 ♖aa1 28.♗b5! ♖xc1 29.♕e4 ♖a5 30.♗d7 ♖a6 31.♕f3+ ♔g8 32.♗e8!, and Black has to give up a piece.

22. ... ♕c6xa6

23. ♘c4-a5 c7-c5?

The commentator ignored Grischuk's inaccurate swap and Riazantsev's reciprocal error. The half-forced variation 23...♘f8! 24.c4 ♕b6! 25.cd ♖xa5 26.♗xa5 ♕xb3 27.♗xc7 ♕xb2 28.♕e3 ♕b4 29.de ♕c4 allows Black to win back one of the pawns and to build a possible 'three versus four' fortress.

24. ♗b3-a4 ♖a8-a7

25. ♗a4xd7 ♖a7xd7

26. d4xc5 ♘d5-c7

27. c2-c4 ♕a6-a8

28. c5-c6 ♖d7-d3

29. ♗d2-c3 ♕a8-f8

30. ♕e1-e5 ♖d3-d1+

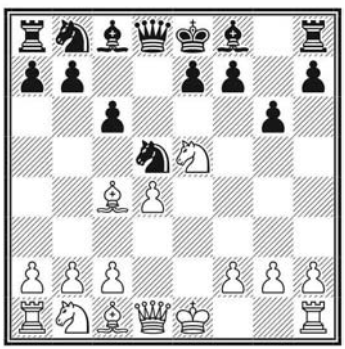
31. ♔g1-h2

1-0

Despite long-held opinions, after 6...♗e6 it's not easy for White to create even a minor advantage! As Black's main ace up his sleeve is to exchange the light-squared bishops, it seems a good idea to hurt his pride a little after 7.♗b3.

Chapter 64. 6. ♗c4 c6

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 d6xe5
5. ♘f3xe5 g7-g6
6. ♗f1-c4 c7-c6



In the previous chapter we convinced ourselves that it's tough for Black to avoid making this modest move. Therefore, Black usually plays it now.

7. 0-0 ...

Other continuations merge back into this line.

7. ... ♗f8-g7

White hopes to unleash an attack on the kingside thanks to his marginal territorial advantage, and for now he puts pressure on e7. Black either pushes his queenside pawns forward or else prepares to attack the center with e6-e5 (which is not possible if White exercises even the minimum of care) and c6-c5.

8. ♖f1-e1 ...

In response to 8.♕e2 0-0 9.♗b3 the most accurate move is 9...a5. Now after 10.c3 a4 11.♗c2 a3!? White cannot play 12.b3? due to 12...♘xc3!, while after 12.ba ♘xc3! 13.♘xc3 ♕xd4 14.♘xf7 ♕xc3 15.♘h6+ ♔h8 16.♖b1 ♕e5 Black equalizes by swapping queens. Geller against Bagirov (Moscow 1991) also stopped the pawn after 10.a3 a4 11.♗a2 ♗e6 12.c4 ♘c7 13.♖d1 ♘d7 14.♗f1 ♘xe5 15.♗xe5 ♗xe5 16.de ♕b8 17.♘c3 ♖a5 18.h3 ♘e8 19.f4 ♘g7 20.♘e4 and offered a draw that was accepted (20...b5! highlights the drawbacks of the bishop being on a2).

The move 8.♗b3 is sometimes associated with chasing the black knight from the center. It's worth following the example of V.Sergeev: when playing Przybylski (Mielno 2007) he put pressure on the d4 pawn to provoke d4-d5 and gained

equality after 8...0-0 9.c4 ♘c7 10.♖e1 ♗f5 11.♘c3 ♘d7 12.♘f3 ♗g4 13.♗e3 ♘e6 14.d5 ♘ec5 15.♗c2 cd 16.cd ♖c8 17.h3 ♗xf3 18.♕xf3 ♘b6 19.♗g5 ♖e8.

The centralized knight promises White a minimal advantage in the variation 8.♘c3 0-0 9.♘e4 ♘d7 10.♘xd7 ♗xd7 11.c3 ♗f5 12.♘g3 ♗e6 13.♗b3. The game Zoltan Almasi against Hodgson (Germany 1994) turned out to be unusually lively after starting as a Pirc Defense: 1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♗g7 3.♘c3 c6 4.♘f3 d6 5.♗c4 ♘f6 6.e5 de 7.♘xe5 0-0 8.0-0 ♘d5 (instead of the main 8...♘bd7) 9.♘e4 ♗f5 10.♘g3 ♗e6 11.f4!? (hoping to gain the initiative after 11...♘xf4 12.♗xf4 ♗xe5 13.♗xe6 ♗xd4+ 14.♔h1 fe 15.♕g4) 11...♘d7 12.f5!? ♗xf5 13.♘xf5 gf 14.♖xf5 ♘xe5 15.de e6 16.♖g5 f5 17.ef ♕xf6 18.♕g3 ♔h8 with equal chances in a double-edged position. The march of the f-pawn is not in keeping with the nature of the position that arises in the Larsen-Kengis variation, which became obvious after 12...♘xe5 13.de ♘e3! 14.♗xe3 ♗xc4 15.♖f4 b5.

Spraggett skillfully countered the strong move 8.c3 (versus Vorobiov, Vrsac 2008): 8...♘d7 9.♘f3 ♘7b6 10.♗b3 ♗g4 11.♘bd2 0-0 12.h3 ♗xf3 13.♘xf3 ♕c7 14.♕e2 e6 15.♗g5 c5 16.♖ad1 ♖fe8 17.♖fe1 ♖ac8 18.♗xd5 ♘xd5 19.c4 ♘f6 20.♕e5 ♘d5 21.♕e2 ♘f6 22.♕e5 ♘d5. Perfection personified: the queen's bishop exchanged, d5 strengthened, the thematic charge c6-c5 and a logical draw by move repetition. A very young Magnus Carlsen was outplayed by Sarbok (Gausdal 2003) after 9.♘xd7 ♗xd7 10.♘d2 0-0 11.♘f3 ♗e6 12.♕e2 ♘c7 13.♗f4 ♗xc4 14.♕xc4 ♘e6 15.♗e5 ♕d5 16.♕xd5 cd 17.♖fe1 f6 18.♗g3 ♔f7 19.♖e2 ♘d8 20.♘e1 ♖c8 21.♘d3 e6 22.♖ae1, but even taking into account the double-edged queen exchange and the less than necessary f7-f6, Black's position is bearable for now.

Finally, move 8.♘d2 is the subject of Game 71.

8. ... 0-0

Vaganian has preferred to postpone castling here in favor of the concrete plan described in the previous comment (regarding the game Vorobiov – Spraggett). After 8...♘d7 9.♘f3 ♘7b6 10.♗f1 ♗g4 11.c3 0-0 12.♘bd2 ♕c7 13.h3 ♗xf3 14.♘xf3 e6 15.g3 ♖ad8 16.♗g5 ♗f6 17.h4 ♗xg5 18.hg c5 19.dc ♕xc5 20.♕c2 ♘b4 21.♕e4 ♘c6 22.♖ad1 ♕a5 23.a3 ♕a4 24.♗d3 ♕xe4 25.♗xe4 ♘a4 26.♖b1 ♖d6 27.♖e3 ♖fd8 Arnason gained the advantage deep into the endgame versus the Armenian Grandmaster, but at this point it's impossible to criticize Black's play and chances are equal. Huebner versus Vaganian (Germany 2000) preferred 15.♗g5 c5 16.♕d2 cd 17.♘xd4 ♘c4 18.♗xc4 ♕xc4 19.♗h6 ♖ad8 20.♗xg7 ♔xg7 21.♖e4 ♘f6 22.♕e2

♕xe2 23.♖xe2 ♖d5 24.♖ae1 ♖c8 25.♖e5 with a peaceful outcome to a quickly played game, in which he clearly didn't bust his gut.

9. ♗c4-b3 ...

Handoko in his game with Kupreichik (Moscow 1994) retreated his bishop to f1 in good time and then chased the enemy knight from the center: 9.♗f1 ♗f5 10.c4 ♘b4 11.♘a3 ♘d7 12.♘g4 ♗xg4 13.♕xg4 e5 14.♗g5 ♗f6 15.♗d2 a5 16.♗c3 h5 17.♕d1 ed 18.♗xd4 ♘b6 19.♗xf6 ♕xf6. White never got round to extricating his knight from a3 and ended up with nothing about his plan to boast about.

9.h3 has also been seen in serious chess, as it prevents the bishop from moving to g4. A possible continuation is 9...♗f5 10.♗b3 a5 11.a3 a4 12.♗c2 ♘d7 13.♘f3 ♘7b6 14.c4 ♗xb1 15.♖xb1 ♘c7 16.♗f4 ♘e6 17.♗e5 c5 18.♗xg7 ♔xg7 19.dc ♘d7 20.♕d5?! (20. c6 bc 21.♘d4 ♘xd4 22.♕xd4 e5 23.♕d6 c5 24.♖bd1 ♖a7 25.♗b1 ♕b8 maintained equality) 20... ♘dxc5 21.♖bd1 ♕c7 22.♕e5+ ♕xe5 23.♖xe5 ♖fd8 24.♖ed5 ♖dc8 25.g3 ♖a6 26.♘d4 ♘xd4 27.♖5xd4 ♖b6 and the knight is clearly better than the bishop (Vachtfeidl – M.Grunberg, Liechtenstein 2005). The bishop's return to a2 proved unjustified and White should have considered blocking Black's advance with 11.a4 (after which Black should consider ♘b8-a6-c7).

Here we return to the idea of handing over the move by playing c2-c3. The light-squared fianchetto does not deserve to be copied, as it reduces the defense of the kingside. After 9.c3 ♘d7 10.♘f3 ♘7f6 11.♘bd2 b6?! 12.♘e5 ♗b7 13.♘df3 Black needs to fight on with his centralized knight via 13...♘d7. 13...e6?! (♔holmov – Onoprienko, Smolensk 1997) is careless due to 14.♘g5! ♕c7 (14... h6?! 15.♘xg6!) 15.♕d3 followed by ♕d3-h3.

The continuation 10...b5?! 11.♗b3 e6 was reached via a different move order in the game Vallejo versus Mamedyarov (Calvia 2004). The extended fianchetto is no better than the usual variety: 12.♗g5 ♕c7 13.♘a3 ♗a6 14.♖c1 h6 15.♗h4 c5?! (instead of this thematic advance he should have opened up his bishop – 15...b4 16.cb ♘xb4) 16.♘xb5! ♗xb5 17.c4 ♗xc4 18.♗xc4 g5 19.♗xd5 ed 20.♗g3 ♕c6 21.dc (21.b3!?) 21... ♗xb2 22.♖c2 ♗g7? (22...♗f6 is more resilient) 23.h4 ♘f6 24.c6 ♘f6 25.♗e5 ♖ac8 26.c7 with a won position. Clearly, it's better to move the bishop to the c8-h3 diagonal, for example: 10...♖e8 11.♗g5 a5 12.a4 ♘7b6 13.♗b3 ♗f5 14.♕c1 ♕c7 15.♗h6 c5 16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.c4 (A.Kovacevic – M.Grunberg, Stara Pazova 2007) 17...♘f4 18.♕c3 f6 with good play.

9. ... ♘b8-d7

The continuation 9...♗e6 sends

us to Chapter 63 (6...♗e6). 9...a5?! isn't a good idea due to 10.c4 – the pawn pair c4-d4 aren't vulnerable here, while Black's holes on the queenside make themselves felt. An obvious illustration is seen in the game Fluvia – Aloma Vidal (Spain 2007): 10...♘c7 (10...♘b6 11.♘c3 ♘8d7 12.♘f3 ♘f6 13.c5! ♘bd5 14.h3! ♖e8 15.♘a4) 11.♘c3 ♘d7 12.♘f3 ♘f6 13.h3 b5 14.♕e2 b4 15.♘a4 ♘e6 16.♗e3 ♗a6 17.♕c2 ♘d7 18.♖ad1 with a serious advantage for White.

10. ♘e5-f3 ♘d7-f6

After 10...♖e8 11.c4 ♘c7 12.♘c3 b6?! 13.♗f4 ♗b7 14.♕d2 ♘f6 15.♖ad1 e6 16.♘e5 ♖c8 17.♗g5 ♖f8 18.♕f4 ♘h5 19.♗xd8 ♘xf4 (Shulman – Conquest, Stockholm 1999) 20.♗e7 ♖fe8 21.♗d6 ♘a6 22.♘e4 Black is in big difficulty. But, unlike after 9...a5?!, his queenside isn't full of holes, and 12...♘f8 followed by developing the bishop is relatively safe.

11. h2-h3 ...

The prophylactic pin ♗c8-g4 brought equal chances and led to a draw soon after in the otherwise uninteresting game van der Wiel – Gausel (England 1997): 11.♗g5 a5 12.c3 ♗g4 13.♘bd2 h6 14.♗xf6 ♗xf6 15.a4 e6 16.h3 ♗xf3 17.♕xf3 ♗g7 18.♘e4 ♕c7 19.g3 ♖ad8 20.h4 ♕b6 21.♗c4 h5 22.♖e2 ♖d7 23.♖ae1 ♕d8 24.♗b3. The principled continuation 11.c4 was employed by Garry Kasparov himself, in Game 72.

11. ... b7-b5

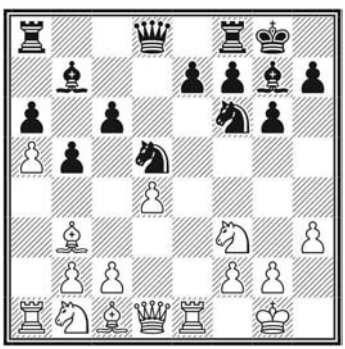
Otherwise, White can continue c2-c4. In the game Short – Vaganian (Riga 1995) White was not dissuaded by the availability of a new square to which the knight could retreat: 11...e6 12.c4 ♘e7 13.♘c3 b6 14.♗f4 ♗b7 15.♕e2 ♗a6 16.♖ad1 ♘ed5!? 17.♗e5 ♘xc3 18.bc ♕e7 19.♕e3 ♖fd8 20.c5 ♘d5 21.♗xd5 cd 22.♗xg7 ♔xg7 23.♘e5 ♖ac8 24.cb ab 25.♖b1 ♖d6 26.a4 with better chances. If White wants to avoid doubling pawns then he can consider 16.♗e5!? ♘ed5 17.♘e4.

12. a2-a4 ...

Kovalevskaya versus Zhukova (Batumi 2000) preferred positional manoeuvring without early contact with her opponent's pawn chain: 12.♘bd2 ♗e6 13.♘e5 ♕c7 14.♘d3 ♘d7 15.c3 ♖ad8 16.♕f3 ♘7b6 17.♘c5 ♗c8 18.♘de4. Even so, White's pressure is quite palpable.

12. ... ♗c8-b7

13. a4-a5 a7-a6



14.c4?! bc 15.♗xc4 ♕c7 16.b3 ♖fd8 17.♘bd2 e6 18.♗b2 has been

played here (Cawdery – Gluckman, South Africa 2003), and after 18... c5 19.dc ♕xc5 Black was fine thanks to his strong knight. A good move played later can sometimes become a bad move. After 14.♘e5 ♘d7 15.♗xd5 cd 16.♗f4 the bishop on b7 looks rather pitiful, and these difficulties will last for a long time.

Game 71
T.Ernst – S.Agdestein
Reykjavik 1995

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**d6xe5**
5.	**♘f3xe5**	**g7-g6**
6.	**♗f1-c4**	**c7-c6**
7.	**0-0**	**♗f8-g7**
8.	**♘b1-d2**	**...**



This is a popular continuation here, among strong players as well.

8. ... 0-0

Loeffler versus Nunn (Germany 1993) managed to avoid castling: 8...♘d7 9.♘ef3 b5 10.♗b3 a5 11.a4 ♘7b6 12.♘e5 bc 13.♘xc6 ♕d6 14.♗xd5 ♕xd5 15.♕f3 ♗e6 16.c3 ♖c8 17.♕xd5 ♗xd5 18.♘xa7 ♖b8 19.♖e1 ♔d7 with a tendency towards a blockade and a draw soon after. Note that had White gone for an exchange with 10.♗xd5!? cd Black would have loved to return his pawn to b7.

9. ♘d2-f3 ...

The centralized knight is weaker than in the case in Chapter 63, as the bishop hasn't moved to e6 and the knight sorties ♘e4-c5 or ♘e4-g5 only fire blanks. At the very least Thomas Ernst was happy to reach an equal major piece endgame against Kengis (Haninge 1992): 9.♘e4 ♗f5 10.♘c5 a5 11.♖e1 (11. a4!?) 11...b6 12.♘cd3 b5 13.♗b3 ♗xd3 14.♕xd3 a4 15.♗xd5 ♕xd5 16.♗f4 ♖d8 17.♘f3 e6 18.♗c7 ♖c8 19.♗e5 ♘d7 20.♗xg7 ♔xg7 21.c3 ♖e8 22.♘e5 f6 23.♘xd7 ♕xd7. Kengis's suggestion 13... a4 14.♗xd5 ♕xd5 15.♘b4 ♕d6 16.a3 c5 17.♕f3 cb 18.♕xa8 is best continued with 18...ba 19.♕a5 ♘c6 20.♘xc6 ♕xc6 and Black's bishop pair is promising.

9. ... ♘b8-d7

The names 'orthodox', 'typical', 'standard' or 'template' are no excuse for not calculating the consequences of attacking the center in each concrete position. After 9...♗f5 10.♖e1 ♘d7 11.h3 ♘xe5 12.♘xe5 ♕c7 13.c3 ♖ad8 14.♕f3 ♕d6 15.♗b3 c5 16.dc ♕xc5

(Zulfugarli – Baburin, Istanbul 2000) the white pieces are set up perfectly, and 17.♗g5! ♗e6 (17...f6? 18.♗e3 ♕d6 19.♘xg6! ♗xg6 20.c4) 18.♖ad1 further increases his advantage. The Azeri chess player preferred 17.♘g4 ♗xg4 18.♕xg4 b5 19.♕f3 b4 20.cb ♘xb4 21.♗e3 ♕a5 22.♖ed1 e6 – and the black pieces have vastly improved their position.

10. ♘e5-d3 ...

10.♖e1 ♘xe5 11.♘xe5 ♗e6 12.♗b3 leads to positions from Chapter 63. There's nothing special about the structure after 11.de ♗g4 12.h3 ♗xf3 13.♕xf3 e6. The game could continue 14.a4 ♕c7 15.♕e4 ♖fd8 16.h4 ♖d7 17.h5 ♘e7 18.♗g5 c5 19.c3 ♘c6 20.hg hg 21.♗f6 (Shaw – Green, Scotland 2010), and 21...♘a5? 22.♗xe6! fe 23.♕xg6 followed by bringing the rook over led to disaster for Black. But this apparently strong kingside attack would not have led to anything had Black executed the manoeuvre ♘c6-e7-f5.

The knight's retreat is not as harmless as Timothy Taylor made out. From d3 the knight controls important dark squares, while even if Black gets to swap it he isn't guaranteed equality.

10. ... ♘d7-b6

10...a5 11.a3 ♘7b6 is less precise, as White's bishop gets to return to a2. After 12.♗a2 ♗g4 13.c3 e6 14.h3 ♗xf3 15.♕xf3 ♘c8 16.♖e1 ♘d6 17.♗d2 ♘f5 18.♖ad1 ♕c7 19.♗c1 b6 20.♘f4 ♖fd8?! 21.♗b1 ♘d6 22.h4 b5 23.h5 Tzermiadianos launched an attack against Kengis's king (Komotini 1992) and emerged victorious. 20...b5 would have been more careful, keeping the rook close to the king.

11. ♗c4-b3 a7-a5

Agdestein (who has played this line on both sides of the board) didn't like swapping the bishop for the knight on f3. The game Nijboer – Vaganian (Netherlands 2001) continued 11...♗g4 12.c3 e6 13.h3 ♗xf3 14.♕xf3 ♘d7 15.♕g3 a5 16.a4 ♖e8 17.♖e1 ♕b6 18.♗c4 ♕c7 19.♕xc7 ♘xc7 20.♗f4 ♖ec8 21.♖ad1 b5 22.♗b3 ♗f8 23.♖a1 – Black doesn't have the strength to break free and has to mount a careful defense.

12. a2-a3 ...

Let's compare two different ways that Black exchanges his bishop following 12.a4. After 12...♗g4 13.c3 e6 14.h3 ♗xf3 15.♕xf3 ♘d7 16.♖e1 ♖e8 17.♗d2 ♕b6 18.♗a2 ♕c7 19.♖e2 ♘7f6 20.♖ae1 (Movsesian – Konopka, Zlin 1998) the blunder 20...b5?? 21.ab cb 22.♗xd5 ruined Black's position, while after 12...♗f5 13.♖e1 ♕c7 14.♗g5 ♗xd3 15.♕xd3 e6 16.c3 ♘d7 17.♖ad1 ♖fe8 18.g3 ♕b6 19.♕c2 ♕a6 20.h4 h6 21.♗d2 ♖ad8 (Bologan – Miroshnichenko, Kragujevac 2009) chances were practically even. It seems that ♗c8-f5xd3 is more precise than ♗c8-g4xf3.

12. ... ♗c8-f5

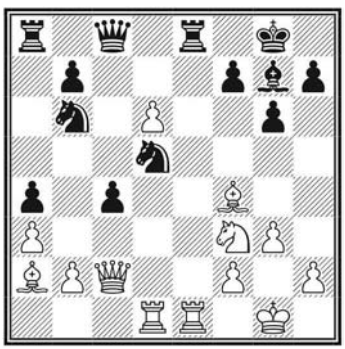
13. ♖f1-e1 ♗f5xd3
14. ♕d1xd3 ♕d8-c7
15. g2-g3 ♖f8-e8

He could have considered 15...a6 16.a4 e6, freeing up the square for the retreating knight. **The manoeuvre ♘d5-e7-f5 is an important defensive resource for Black in the Larsen-Kengis variation.**

16. c2-c4 ♘d5-f6
17. ♗c1-f4 ♕c7-c8
18. ♖a1-d1 c6-c5

Here Ernst could have chosen to continue 19.dc!? ♘bd7 20.♕c2 ♘c5 21.♗a4 ♘xa4 22.♕xa4, which is certainly not harmless. The activity of White's pieces compensates for the holes in his kingside.

19. d4-d5 e7-e6
20. ♗b3-a2 a5-a4
21. ♕d3-c2 e6xd5
22. ♖e1xe8+ ♕c8xe8
23. c4xd5 c5-c4
24. d5-d6 ♘f6-d5



The situation in the center has changed, and most probably in Black's favor: White's passed pawn is mostly a burden to him and he needs to find a clever way to swap it for his opponent's c-pawn. This objective can be achieved via 25.♖e1 ♕c6 26.♗e5; the Swedish Grandmaster's decision is not objectively worse, but the value of each move has sharply increased.

25. ♗f4-g5 ♕e8-c6
26. ♘f3-d2 c4-c3
27. ♘c3-b1! h7-h6
28. ♗g5-e7?! ...

He should have played this after first capturing on d5. After 28.♗xd5 ♘xd5 29.♗e7 cb?! 30.♕xc6 bc 31.d7 ♘e7 32.d8♕+ ♖xd8 33.♖xd8+ ♔h7 34.♖d7 the advantage of the exchange is somewhat better than the blocked passed pawns.

28. ... c3xb2
29. ♕c2-e4 ♖a8-a5?!

Black should have played 29... ♘xe7 30.♕xe7 ♕f3! 31.♖f1 ♕f5, neutralizing the d6 pawn.

30. ♗e7-d8? ...

Yet again, the bishop makes the right move too early! The complicated computer variation 30.♕f3! ♖b5 31.♗d8! ♘c4 32.♕d3 ♖c5 33.♗e7 is impossible to assess accurately. That said, it wasn't hard to find the first move – he needed to defend his own rook in case the enemy rook invaded.

30. ... ♖a5-c5
31. ♗d8xb6 ♖c5-c1!
32. ♖d1-f1 ♘d5xb6
33. ♕e4xg6 ...

White immediately gives up his passed pawn, although if he chooses

the more resilient 33.♕e7 ♔h7 34.♕xf7 h5 the black king is safe and the pawn is still doomed.

33.	**...**	**♘b6-c4**
34.	**♕g6-d3**	**♘c4xd6**
35.	**♘b1-d2**	**b7-b5**
36.	**♗a2-b1**	**♔g8-f8**
37.	**♕d3-e3**	**♘d6-c4**
38.	**♕e3-d3**	**♕c6-d6**
39.	**♕d3-e4**	**♘c4xd2**
40.	**♕e4-a8+**	**♔f8-e7**

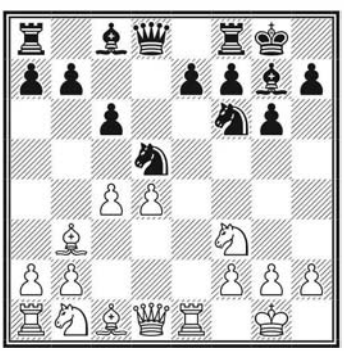
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Game 72

G.Kasparov – M.Adams

Linares 1997

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**d6xe5**
5.	**♘f3xe5**	**g7-g6**
6.	**♗f1-c4**	**c7-c6**
7.	**0-0**	**♗f8-g7**
8.	**♖f1-e1**	**0-0**
9.	**♗c4-b3**	**♘b8-d7**
10.	**♘e5-f3**	**♘d7-f6**
11.	**c2-c4**	**...**



This is the only game (at least in the Megabase), in which the thirteenth world champion faced the Larsen-Kengis variation. But as we see he was totally up to date with the latest fashion.

11. ... **♘d5-c7**

Adams goes straight for a novelty. That said, 11...♘b6 had previously been played only once (Matulovic – Todorovic, Tivat 1995), after which the knight immediately vacated the square to make room for the pawn: 12.h3 ♘bd7 13.♘c3 e6 14.♗f4 b6 15.♕d2 ♗b7 16.♖ad1 ♖e8 17.♕c1 ♖c8 18.♘g5 ♗f8 19.a3. Black has a very dispiriting and cramped position, although with no obvious weaknesses.

12. h2-h3 **...**

It's possible that Rowson versus Baburin (Torshavn 2000) was unaware of the precedents when he didn't prevent the pin: 12.♘c3 ♗g4 13.♗e3 e5?! 14.de ♘d7 15.h3 ♗xf3 16.♕xf3 ♘xe5 17.♕g3 ♘e6 18.♖ad1 ♕e7 19.f4 ♘f7 20.f5 gf 21.♗c2 (21.♗h6!?) 21... ♘e5 22.♗xf5 ♘xc4 23.♗d4 ♕g5 24.♕xg5 ♘xg5. After 25.♗xg7 ♔xg7 26.♖d4! b5 27.h4 ♘e6 28.♗xe6 ♖ae8 29.♖d7 ♔h8 Black wins back the piece, but he will have to fight hard to get a draw. It's clear here that Black is not ready for the position to be opened up.

12. ... **c6-c5**

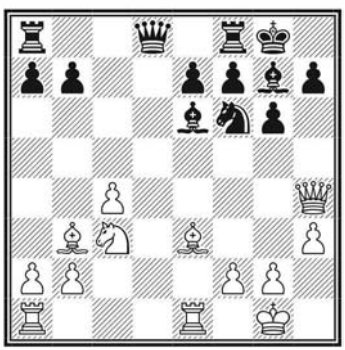
Aguera and Rodriguez Fernandez (Oviedo 2003) avoided the main line: 12...b5 13.♘e5 ♗b7 14.♘c3

♘d7 15.♘g4 e6 16.♘h6+ ♔h8 17.♕f3 bc 18.♗a4. The white knight has moved in the wrong direction and a draw by repetition with 18... ♕f6 19.♕g3 ♕d8 20.♕f3 ♕f6 is logical here. Generally, it's worth struggling for control of d5, as in the variation 14.c5 ♘d7 15.♗f4 ♘xe5 16.♗xe5 ♗xe5 17.♖xe5 (Kasparov) 17...♗c8 and then ♗c8-e6 Black looks more or less fine.

13. ♘b1-c3 c5xd4
14. ♘f3xd4 ♘c7-e6
15. ♗c1-e3 ♘e6xd4
16. ♕d1xd4 ...

After 16.♗xd4 ♗e6 17.♘d5 ♘xd5 18.♗xg7 ♘e3! 19.♕xd8 ♖fxd8 20.♗c3 ♘f5 White's advantage isn't much, as he hasn't managed to advance his queenside pawns. Therefore, Kasparov believes that capturing with the queen is stronger. Yet it's hard to believe that Black is losing here.

16. ... ♗c8-e6
17. ♕d4-h4 ...



17. ... ♕d8-a5?!

This is an important loss of tempo, which went ignored by previous commentators. If 17...a6 18.c5 ♗xb3 19.ab ♕c8 20.b4 ♖d8 then the continuation 21.♗f4?! is met by 21...♖d4, while after 21.♗g5 ♖d7 22.♖d1 ♖xd1+ 23.♖xd1 a5 Black mounts a successful defense.

18. c4-c5 ♗e6xb3
19. a2xb3 ♕a5-c7
20. b3-b4 a7-a6

If 20...a5, then 21.b5 ♖fd8 22.♕c4 ♖ac8 23.♖a4! – and White is ready to capture on a5 after 24.b6.

21. ♗e3-f4 ♕c7-c6
22. ♖e1xe7 ♘f6-d5
23. ♘c3xd5 ♕c6xd5
24. ♕h4-g4 ...

Kasparov maintains course towards a won ending, although the middlegame isn't over yet. 24.♖ae1 ♗xb2 25.♗d6 planning 26.♖1e5! with ways to trap the enemy king is also possible, while White retains the queen swap in reserve.

24. ... ♖a8-e8?!

Adams takes the bait. Kasparov demonstrates 24...♖fd8 25.♖ae1 ♗xb2(?!) 26.♗c7 ♖dc8 27.♗e5 ♗xe5 28.♖1xe5 ♕c6 29.♖5e6! (29...fe? 30.♕d4), but 25...♗f8 26.♖c7 a5 27.ba ♗xc5 is more accurate, and Black has chances to struggle on a pawn down.

25. ♕g4-d7 ♕d5xd7
26. ♖e7xd7 ♗g7xb2
27. ♖a1-d1 ♖e8-e4
28. ♗f4-d6 ♖f8-c8
29. ♖d7xb7 ♗b2-c3
30. ♖d1-b1 ♖e4-c4
31. ♖b1-c1! ♖c4xb4

32. c5-c6 ♖b4-d4
33. c6-c7
1-0

The plan with c2-c4 is so effective that Black should either follow in Vaganian's footsteps (6... c6 7.0-0 ♗g7 8.♖e1 ♘d7 9.♘f3 ♘7b6 10.♗f1 ♗g4) or else play 8...0-0 9.♗b3 ♗e6 and return to Chapter 63. In which case Black has a satisfactory position.

Chapter 65.
5...c6. Various White alternatives

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 d6xe5
5. ♘f3xe5 c7-c6



Black strengthens the knight straight away, while at the same time freeing up the c7 square in case the knight needs to retreat. The king's bishop will probably stick to the a3-f8 diagonal. The setup of Black's other pieces will depend on White's position.

This variation is often associated with Tony Miles. Magnus Carlsen played 5...c6 in 2007-2008, mostly in Blitz games. Timothy Taylor found new and enhanced strategic ideas in his games and hence proposed calling it the Carlsen Variation. We highlight that the Norwegian has tried various setups for Black here, without bothering too much about desk-top exercises. And it's also true that Miles was hardly the first player to try 5...c6 and anyway he wasn't a huge devotee of this modest pawn move. Let's call it the Miles-Carlsen Variation!

6. ♘b1-d2 ...

The queen's knight is ready to support its comrade. 6.c3, 6.♕f3 and 6.c4 are seen in games 73, 74 and 75 respectively, while 6.♗d3 and 6.♗c4 are the subjects of 66 and 67. 6.♗e2 is considered in Chapters 68 and 69. The remaining move to consider is 6.g3. After 6...♗f5 7.♗g2 ♘d7 8.♘f3 e6 9.♘h4 ♗b4+ 10.♘d2 ♗g6 11.0-0 0-0 12.♘xg6 hg 13.c4 ♘5f6 14.♕b3 ♕a5 15.♘f3 ♗e7 16.♗f4 (16.♕xb7 ♖ab8

17.♗d2! ♖xb7 18.♗xa5 ♖xb2 is just as good) 16...♕b6 17.♕xb6 ♘xb6 18.b3 ♗a3 19.♖ad1 ♖fd8 Black has a solid position (Seeman – Maki Uuro, Finland 2013). The game Goloshchapov – Mamedyarov (Abu Dhabi 2005) soon saw more active play: 6...♘d7 7.♘d3 ♘f6 8.♘d2 ♗f5 9.♘f3 e6 10.c3 ♗e7 11.♗g2 0-0 12.0-0 ♕b6 13.♕e2 ♖fd8 14.♘fe5 h6 15.♖e1 ♖ac8 16.♗d2 c5?! 17.dc ♗xc5 18.♘xc5 ♖xc5 19.g4 ♘xg4!? 20.♘xg4 ♕xb2 21.h3 ♘xc3 22.♗xc3 ♕xc3 23.♖ad1 ♖xd1 24.♖xd1 b5 with three pawns for the piece and some nice prospects. Maybe it wasn't a good idea to open up the game: 19.c4 ♘e7? 20.♗e3 ♖xe5 21.♗xb6 ♖xe2 22.♗xd8 is no good, but after 19...♘c7 (in order to place the knight in the path of the bishop in an otherwise similar continuation) the rook's path home is cut off.

6. ... ♘b8-d7

Interestingly, after 6...♗f5 7.♕f3 Wohl (versus Tiviakov, Leiden 2010) wasn't afraid of losing a tempo with 7...♗e6, despite having normal defensive moves 7...e6 and 7...g6 at his disposal. The queen has broken the connection between the knights and Black gains equal chances – 8.c3 ♘d7 9.♘dc4 g6 10.♗d3 ♗g7 11.0-0 0-0 12.♖e1 c5! 13.♘xd7 ♕xd7 14.dc ♖ac8 15.♘d2 ♖xc5 16.♘b3 ♖cc8.

7. ♘d2-f3 ...

Retreating with 7.♘d3 doesn't promise anything much. After 7...e6 8.♗e2 c5 9.dc ♘xc5 10.♘xc5 ♗xc5 11.♘e4 ♗e7 Black has successfully freed up his position, although he still needs to solve the problem of his queen's knight. Motylev against Pavlov (Plovdiv 2010) gained a small advantage after 7...♘7f6 8.♗e2 ♗f5 9.♘f3 e6 10.0-0 ♘b4 11.♘de1 ♗d6 12.c4 c5 13.♗e3 ♘g4 14.♗g5 ♕c7 15.h3 ♘f6 16.a3 ♘c6 17.dc ♗xc5 18.♗xf6 gf 19.b4 ♗e7 20.c5, although ♘d5-b4 was questionable.

High-level chess has also seen 7...g6: Cuban Grandmaster Nogueiras has played this several times. Against Vazquez (Santa Clara 2000) he got into a strategically unenviable position after 8.♘f3 ♗g7 9.♗e2 c5 10.c4 ♘5b6?! 11.♕b3 ♕c7 12.♗f4 ♕c6 13.d5 ♕a4 14.♘d2 ♕a5 15.c4 ♘f6 16.♕b5+ ♕xb5 17.ab. In his game with Zapata (Merida 2002) the Cuban preferred a pawn attack on the queenside but also failed to achieve full equality: 9...0-0 10.0-0 a5 11.♖e1 b5 12.c3 ♗a6 13.♘fe5 ♘xe5 14.♘xe5 ♕c7 15.a4 e6 16.♗d3 ba 17.♗xa6 ♖xa6 18.♖xa4 ♕b7 19.♘d3 ♖xa5 20.h4 h5 21.♗g5. Finally, Nogueiras improved his play from the first fragment in his game with Egin (Calvia 2004) and achieved what he had set out to achieve: 9...c5 10.c4 ♘5f6 11.d5 b5! 12.♘de5 (12.cb a6 13.ba ♘xd5 – isn't this a Benko Gambit?!) 12...♘xe5 13.♘xe5 bc 14.♗f3 (the Cuban suggested that White should have maintained equality here with 14.♗xc4 0-0

15.♘c6 ♕d7 16.♕f3 ♗b7) 14...0-0 15.d6 ed 16.♗xa8 de 17.♕xd8 ♖xd8 with more than sufficient compensation for the exchange.

7. ... ♘d7xe5

8. ♘f3xe5 ♗c8-f5

8...g6 is not usually a line unto itself if the game continues naturally (such as 9.♗c4), while trying less natural continuations isn't a good idea. For example, 9.h4 ♗g7 10.h5 ♕d6 (10...♗xe5!? 11.de ♗f5 is simpler and gives Black an advantage in development 'for free') 11.♘c4 ♕c7 12.h6 ♗f6 13.g4?! 0-0 14.♗g2?! ♘f4 15.♗f3 ♗e6 16.♘e3 ♖ad8 17.c3 c5 18.d5 ♘xd5 19.♗xd5 ♗xd5 20.♘xd5 ♕e5+ 21.♗e3 ♖xd5 22.♕f3 ♗g5, and White ends up with nothing (Donskov – Yevseev, St. Petersburg 2012).

9. ♗f1-c4 ...

In the variation 9.♕f3 e6 10.♗d3 ♗b4+! 11.c3 ♘xc3! (Lejarre – Cornette, France 2002) 12.♗d2 ♘xa2!? 13.♖xa2 ♗xd2+ 14.♔xd2 ♕xd4 15.g4 ♕xe5 16.gf 0-0 Black has three pawns for the piece in an unclear position. If White wants to exchange bishops then he should do so straight away: 9.♗d3 ♗xd3 10.♘xd3 e6 11.0-0 ♗d6 12.♕g4 ♕f6 13.♗d2 ♖d8 14.♖ad1 ♕g6 15.♕e2 0-0 16.♖fe1 ♕f5 17.g3 ♗e7 18.c3 ♖fe8 19.♗c1 ♗d6 20.a3 b5 21.♕e4 ♕xe4 22.♖xe4 ♔f7 (Palac – Bauer, France 2003). Once the queens are off the board the struggle loses what remains of its sharpness and ends in a logical draw.

9. ... e7-e6

10. 0-0 ...

The game Mainka – Forchert (Bad Wiessee 2008) continued 10.♗b3 ♗d6 11.♕e2 h6 12.0-0 0-0 13.c4 ♘f6 14.♗f4 ♕e7 15.♖fe1 ♖fe8 16.♕f3 ♘d7 17.g4 ♗xe5 18.de ♗g6 – Black makes a laughing stock of White's bishop pair 'advantage'. It's already clear here that White should have agreed to exchange bishops with 15.♗c2, while it's unclear if ♗c4-b3 makes much sense.

10. ... ♗f8-d6

11. ♖f1-e1 ♕d8-c7

12. c2-c3 ...



This position has occurred twice in the games of German Grandmaster Thomas Luther. Against Stefansson (Malmo 2002) he opted to castle short: 12...0-0 13.♕e2 ♖ad8 14.a3 ♖fe8 15.a4 c5 16.♘f3 ♗e7 17.♗d2 ♗f6 18.♘e5 a6 19.a5. Now, 19...♗xe5 20.de ♘e7 threatens ♘e7-c6 and forces the exchange of the knight via ♗d2-g5 with chances to equalize.

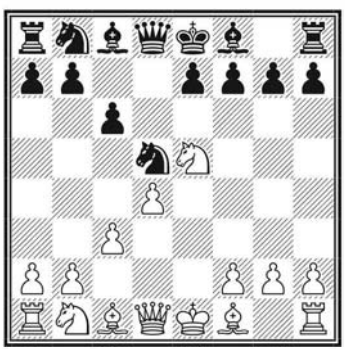
But given that Seger (Saarbruecken 2002) was willing to replace the slow advance of the rook pawn with a more sensible plan, Luther mixed the game up a little by castling long. After 12...0-0-0 13.♕e2 f6 14.♘f3 g5 15.♔h1 h5 16.♗d3 ♗g4 17.h3 ♗f4 18.♗e4 ♔b8 19.♗xd5 ed 20.♗xf4 ♕xf4 21.♕e3 ♕c7 22.♘d2 ♗d7 23.♘f1 White has safely defended his kingside, which would have been somewhat trickier after 17...♔b8 and ♕c7-g7 (with the idea of g5-g4). As we can see, White can forget about any advantage here.

Game 73

A.Sokolov – M.Chetverik

Cappelle-la-Grande 2008

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**d6xe5**
5.	**♘f3xe5**	**c7-c6**
6.	**c2-c3**	**...**



Creating this dark-squared pawn chain could lead vis a change in move order to different lines. White's modest pawn move is without doubt useful. Note that six years earlier Andrei Sokolov had played the aggressive 6.c4 and ended up with an unenviable position.

6. ... ♘b8-d7

After 6...♗f5 7.♗d3 ♗xd3 8.♕xd3 ♘d7 9.♘f3 e6 10.0-0 White has a minimal advantage in a quiet position. With the help of c3-c4 White gains a little more territory, but then runs into firm bastions as he advances.

7. ♘e5-f3 ...

7.♘xd7 ♗xd7 8.♗d3 g6 9.0-0 ♗g7 10.♖e1 is analyzed in Chapter 66 via the move order 6.♗d3 ♘d7 7.♘xd7 ♗xd7 8.0-0 g6 9.♖e1 ♗g7 10.c3.

7. ... ♘d7-f6

8. ♘b1-d2 ...

If 8.♗d3, then the bishop is more than happy to pin the knight. Bailet and Degraeve (France 2010) continued: 8...♗g4 9.0-0 e6 10.♘bd2 ♗e7 11.♖e1 0-0 12.♕b3 ♕c7 13.♘e5 c5 14.♘xg4 (14.♘e4!?) 14...♘xg4 15.♘f3 cd 16.h3 ♘gf6 17.♘xd4 ♗xc5 18.♗g5 h6 19.♗h4 ♗xd4 20.cd ♖fd8 21.♗e4 ♖d7 22.♗f3 ♕f4 23.♗xf6 ♕xf6 – and Black already has a slight advantage. Voluntarily swapping the centralized knight isn't a good idea.

8. ... ♗c8-f5

When looking at 8...♗g4 during the post-mortem the Grandmaster

suggested 9.♕b3 ♕b6 10.♘e5 ♕xb3 11.ab e6 12.b4 with the initiative. Therefore, Black should reject taking on b3 and instead play e7-e6 a move earlier.

9. ♘f3-e5 e7-e6

Black had foreseen his opponent's reply but didn't consider it particularly dangerous. More likely than not Degraeve has prepared for his game with Magem (France 2010), as his play commands respect: 9...h6 10.♕f3 e6 11.g4 ♗c2 12.h4 ♕e7 13.♗g2 ♘d7 14.♘dc4 ♘xe5 15.♘xe5 f6 16.♘d3 ♕d7 17.♕e2 ♗xd3 18.♕xd3 ♗d6 19.♕g6+ ♕f7 20.♗e4 h5 21.g5 f5 22.♗f3 g6 locking up the kingside and with a swift draw on the cards. 13.g5 ♘d7 14.♘dc4 ♘xe5 15.♘xe5 hg 16.hg ♖xh1 17.♕xh1 ♗f5 18.♗c4 0-0-0 is also harmless.

10. g2-g4! ♗f5-e4

11. ♘d2xe4 ...

This isn't the most aggressive continuation. After 11.♖g1 h6 12.h4 ♗h7 13.♕f3 g5 14.hg hg 15.♖h1 ♘f4 16.♖h2 (and then maybe, ♕f3-h1) it's hard to see a good move for Black.

11. ... ♘f6xe4

12. ♗f1-g2 ...

It would be a mistake to play 12.♕f3 ♘d6 13.c4 ♘b4 14.c5? ♘c2+ 15.♔d1, as Black then takes the pawn rather than the rook (15... ♘xd4! 16.♕f4 f6 17.cd fe 18.♕xe5 ♕d6 19.♕xd6 ♗xd6 – Black is a pawn up and has an excellent knight in the center).

12. ... ♘e4-d6

Here it's important to harass the white knight, and a stronger way of implementing this idea is 12...♘ef6 (and then ♘f6-d7 as soon as the chance arises).

13. 0-0 ♗f8-e7

If Black attacks on the kingside with 13...h5?! then White should strike back in the center – 14.c4 ♘f6 15.d5! cd 16.cd ♘xg4 17.♘xg4 hg 18.de fe 19.♕xg4 and White can play for a win.

14. c3-c4 ♘d5-c7

15. b2-b3 ...

Sokolov rejected the less effective exchange 15.♘xc6 bc 16.♗xc6+ ♔f8 17.♗xa8 ♘xa8. Houdini judges this position as clearly better for White, but the latter's exposed king leads us to question the computer's view. Black is clearly in bad shape after 15.c5!? ♘db5 16.a4!? ♘xd4 17.♗e3 ♗c5? 18.♖c1, but he should be fine after 17...f6 18.♗xd4 fe 19.♗xe5 ♕xd1 20.♖fxd1 ♘d5.

15. ... 0-0

16. ♗c1-f4 ...

After the game the players agreed that the subsequent exchange of bishops guarantees Black an easy life, so 16.♗b2 is more promising, followed most probably by f2-f4.

16. ... ♗e7-g5

17. ♕d1-d2 ♗g5xf4

18. ♕d2xf4 ♕d8-e7?!

He should have advanced his rook pawn without losing a tempo here.

19. ♖f1-e1 a7-a5

20. ♖a1-d1 a5-a4
21. d4-d5! c6xd5
22. c4xd5 f7-f6?



Black noticed the pretty refutation of this move as soon as he pressed his clock. The Grandmaster, of course, had seen it earlier. After 22...ab 23.ab ♖fd8 24.♘c4 ♖a6 Black retains a fully defensible position.

23. ♘e5-d7! e6-e5

Black is forced to give up the exchange, otherwise he loses his queen after 23...♕xd7 24.de ♘xe6 25.♖xe6 ♕xe6 26.♗d5.

24. ♘d7xf8 ♕e7xf8
25. ♕f4-b4 a4xb3
26. a2xb3 ♘c7-b5
27. f2-f4 ♖a8-a2

Regrouping with 27...ef 28.♕xf4 ♘f7 and ♘b5-d6 would have kept microscopic chances of saving the game. Black carried out this plan later, by which time the game was already lost.

28. ♖d1-d2 ♖a2xd2
29. ♕b4xd2 ♘d6-f7
30. g4-g5! ♕f8-c5+
31. ♔g1-h1 ♔g8-f8
32. g5xf6 g7xf6
33. f4xe5 f6xe5
34. ♖e1-f1 ♘b5-d6
35. ♕d2-h6+ ♔f8-g8
36. ♕h6-e6 ♕c5-b4
37. ♕e6-e7 ♕b4-d2
38. ♖f1-g1 ♕d2-h6
39. ♗g2-h3 ♔g8-h8
40. ♗h3-e6
1-0

Game 74

M.Ragger – E.Miroshnichenko

Austria 2009

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 d6xe5
5. ♘f3xe5 c7-c6
6. ♕d1-f3 ...



The threat of mate virtually forces Black to move his queen's bishop to e6. After this it's not easy for Black to find an alternative to a fianchetto, leading to a fusion with the 5...g6 line (Game 68).

6. ... ♗c8-e6
7. ♗f1-c4 ...

Otherwise there's nothing to play for. As an example of an alternative, see 7.c3 ♘d7 8.♘xd7 ♕xd7 9.♗e2 h5 10.0-0 ♗g4 11.♕d3 e6 12.a4 ♗d6 13.♘a3 ♖d8 14.♘c4 ♗b8 15.♖e1 ♕c7 16.g3 ♗f5 17.♕f3 ♕e7 (Hasangatin – Stocek, Pardubice 2010): the black king feels great in the center, whereas the white king is cowering at the thought of h5-h4.

7. ... g7-g6

The continuation 7...♘d7 8.0-0 ♘xe5 9.de g6 10.♘c3 ♘c7 11.♗d3 ♗g7 12.♕g3 ♕d4 13.♗e3 ♕g4 14.♕xg4 ♗xg4 15.f4 0-0 16.h3 ♗e6 17.a4 f6!? 18.ef ♗xf6 19.♘e4 ♗xb2 20.♖ab1 ♗g7 21.♖xb7 ♘d5 22.♗c5 is also interesting. Rufat Bagirov put up a good show against Ian Nepomniachtchi (Moscow 2006), and with the help of 22... ♗c8! 23.♖xa7 ♖xa7 24.♗xa7 ♗f5 25.a5 ♖a8 26.♗b6 ♘xb6 27.ab ♗d4+ effectively secured a draw. Although he still had to work hard for it ultimately.

8. 0-0 ♗f8-g7
9. c2-c3 ...

9.♘c3 leads to the main line of Chapter 63. The game Luther – V.Bagirov (Leningrad 1989) saw a pawn structure that was somewhat unusual in the Miles-Carlsen line: 9.♖e1 ♘d7 10.♘xd7 ♕xd7 11.c3 0-0 12.♗g5 ♖fe8 13.h3 ♘c7 14.♘d2 ♗d5 15.♗xd5 cd 16.♗f4 ♘e6 17.♗e5 f6 18.♗h2 ♖ac8 19.h4 ♘d8 20.♘f1 ♘c6 21.♘e3 ♖cd8 22.♖e2?! e5 23.de fe with better prospects. If White plays 22.♖ad1 Black has to postpone his central push until happier times and, maybe, should switch to attacking with his pawn minority.

9. ... 0-0
10. ♘b1-d2?! ...

The knight wants to head to c5 or g5 via e4, but here he should not have ignored Black carrying out a typical attack on the center. Therefore, 10.♖e1 is clearly stronger.

10. ... c6-c5
11. ♘d2-b3 c5xd4
12. c3xd4 ♕d8-d6
13. ♘e5-d3? ...

The Austrian Grandmaster has played the opening rather weakly. The excellent c6 square is surrendered to the queen's knight without a struggle. Sacrificing a pawn with 13.♗d2 was totally correct, to say nothing of the banal 13.♖e1.

13. ... ♘b8-c6
14. ♘d3-c5 b7-b5!?

When considering the consequences of 14...♘xd4 15.♘xd4 ♕xc5, Black was probably not over the moon at the doubled pawns. However, the weakness at f2 would make itself felt here, while after 16.♘xe6 fe 17.♕e4 ♔h8 18.♗e2 ♕b6 19.♗g4 ♗d4 20.♗xe6 ♖xf2 21.♖xf2 ♗xf2+ 22.♔h1 ♘f6 the bishop pair are hardly compensation for the lost pawn despite the open position.

15. ♗c4xb5 ...

Or 15.♘b7 ♕b8 16.♗xd5 ♗xd5 17.♕xd5 ♕xb7 18.♕e4, patiently defending the isolated pawn. Ragger retained the smooth pawn structure in the game, but on the other hand has difficulties in developing.

15. ... ♘c6xd4
16. ♘b3xd4 ♗g7xd4
17. ♘c5-e4 ♕d6-b6
18. ♗b5-c4 ♖a8-c8
19. ♗c4-b3 ♘d5-c7
20. ♘e4-g5 ♗e6xb3
21. ♕f3-h3 h7-h5
22. a2xb3?! ...

White has no attack whatsoever, so he should have sought a draw after exchanging queens.

22. ... ♘c7-d5
23. ♘g5-f3 ♗d4xf2+!
24. ♔g1-h1? ...

In the line 24.♖xf2 ♖xc1 25.♖xc1 ♘f4 26.♕d7 ♘e2+ 27.♔h1 ♘xc1 28.♖f1 ♘xb3 29.♕xe7 White is highly unlikely to save the game, but it was his only chance. Miroshnichenko finishes off the game elegantly and energetically.

24. ... ♗f2-e3
25. ♘f3-e5 ♖c8xc1
26. ♖a1xc1 ♗e3xc1
27. ♖f1xc1 ♕b6-d4
28. ♕h3-g3 ♕d4xb2
29. ♖c1-f1 h5-h4!
30. ♕g3-g5 ♕b2-e2
31. ♖f1-a1 h4-h3
32. ♘e5-d7 ♘d5-f4!

0-1

Game 75

I.Khamrakulov – R.Aloma Vidal

Palma de Mallorca 2009

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 d6xe5
5. ♘f3xe5 c7-c6
6. c2-c4 ...



White immediately chases the knight from the center. Despite the obvious positional concessions this line has been played suspiciously often.

6. ... ♘d5-b4

Other ways of retreat are either unambitious (6...♘c7 7.♘c3 is considered via the move order 4... c6 5.c4 ♘c7 6.♘c3 de 7.♘xe5) or else totally dubious – 6...♘f6 7.♘c3 ♘bd7 8.♘f3 ♘b6 (which is identical to switching knights via 6...♘b6 7.♘c3 ♘8d7 8.♘f3 ♘f6) 9.♕b3.

7. ♗c1-e3 ...

Caution! Chasing the knight back

via 7.a3? doesn't work due to 7... ♕xd4! Strong chess players have not fallen into this primitive trap, and it's only worth expanding on 8.♘xf7?! After 8...♕e4+ 9.♗e2 ♕xg2 10.♖f1 ♔xf7 11.ab ♕xh2 White has no compensation for the two pawns, while after 10.♗f3 ♘c2+! 11.♔e2 ♗g4 12.♗xg4 ♕xg4+ 13.♔d2 ♕xd1+ 14.♔xd1 ♘xa1 15.♘xh8 g6 Black liquidates White's 'corner' knight while White fails to liquidate Black's.

If 7.♘d3 Black replies with the central tactic 7...e5! and has a more harmonious piece setup with 8.♘xe5 ♕xd4 9.♕e2 ♗e6 10.a3 ♘c2+ 11.♕xc2 ♕xe5+ 12.♗e3 ♘d7. If 8.de then the reliable looking continuation for Black 8...♕d4 9.a3 ♘xd3+ 10.♕xd3 ♕xe5+ 11.♕e2 ♕xe2+ 12.♗xe2 ♗e7 is insufficient if Black is playing to win, and he should instead consider 8...♗f5. After 9.♘xb4 ♗xb4+ 10.♗d2 ♘a6 11.♘c3 ♕d4 12.♗e2 0-0-0 13.♕c1 ♘c5 14.♗e3 ♘d3+ 15.♗xd3 ♕xd3 (Andrijevic – Irizanin, Serbia 2010) White cannot castle, whereas after 11.a3 ♕a5 12.c5 ♖d8 13.♗xa6 ♗xb1 14.ab ♕xa1 15.♗xb7 0-0 the position is totally muddled.

7.♘a3 ♗f5 8.♗e3 leads to the continuation in the game, but overprotecting d4 isn't mandatory, and Black more often rushes to mobilize the kingside here. For example, 8.♗e2 ♘d7 9.♘f3 e5! 10.0-0 e4 11.♘e1 ♗d6 12.♕b3 a5 13.♘ac2 a4 14.♕c3 ♘xc2 15.♘xc2 0-0 16.♗e3 ♕c7 17.g3 ♘f6, and the e4 pawn somewhat cramps White (Andriasian – V.Sveshnikov, Cappelle-la-Grande 2012). In the principled (and somewhat pretty) variation 10.de ♕a5 11.0-0 ♘xe5 12.♘xe5 ♕xe5 13.♖e1 ♖d8 14.♗d3 ♗e4 15.♕f3 ♗xf3 16.♖xe5+ ♗e7 17.♗f1 ♗g4 White also makes do with equality.

7. ... ♗c8-f5

8. ♘b1-a3 ...

Grandmaster Baburin successfully took action against 8.♘d3?!. He swiftly crushed Gillani (Calvia 2004) as a result of White's blunders under pressure: 8...e5! 9.♘xb4 ♗xb4+ 10.♘c3 ♕a5 11.♕b3 ed 12.♗xd4 0-0 13.0-0-0 ♘a6 14.♗d3 ♖fd8 15.♗xf5 ♕xf5 16.♕c2?! (16.♗xa7!?) 16...♕f4+ 17.♕d2?? (17.♗e3 would have allowed White to escape at the cost of a pawn) 17...♖xd4. The line 10...0-0 11.de ♗xc3+ 12.bc ♕a5 13.♕b3 ♕xe5 14.♗e2 ♗e4!? 15.0-0 c5 has not been tested – but the white bishops look rather pitiful here.

8. ... ♘b8-d7

After 8...e6 9.g4!? ♗e4 10.f3 f6 11.♘f7! ♗xf3 12.♘xd8 ♗xd1 13.♘e6 ♗f3 14.♖g1 ♘8a6 15.♖g3 ♗e4 16.♗d2 ♔f7 17.♘xf8 ♖hxf6 18.♖b3 (Andriasian – Goikhman, St. Petersburg 2011) the enemy crept up on the knight on b4 from an unexpected side following a series of exchanges. However, 10...♗g6 11.h4 f6 12.♘xg6 hg would have

kept the position approximately equal.

9. ♕d1-f3 ...

Here we definitely don't recommend exchanging the enemy bishop, as Black's hands are freed to act in the center: 9.g4?! ♗e4 10.f3 ♗g6 11.♘xg6 hg 12.♘b1 e5! 13.a3 ♘a6 14.♘c3 ed 15.♗xd4 ♘ac5 16.b4 ♘e6 17.♗f2 (Ponkratov – Shimanov, Moscow 2013, rapid game). Now, 17...a5! 18.b5 ♕f6 19.♘e4 ♕b2 may at first glance appear risky but in fact leads to a clear advantage for Black.

Attacking the center with e7-e5 in the 6.c4 line is best carried out as soon as is convenient. For example, 9.♘f3 e5! 10.de?! ♕a5 or 10.♘xe5?! ♘xe5 11.de ♕a5 is clearly better for Black. In a game in the Kamsky – Mamedyarov internet match (2006), the position was equal after 10.♗e2 e4 11.♘d2 ♘d3 12.♗xd3 ed 13.♕b3 ♕b6 14.0-0 ♕xb3 15.ab ♗b4 16.♘ab1 0-0.

Even in response to 9.♘xd7 ♕xd7 10.♗e2 Giri preferred 10... e5!? against Ginsburg (Germany 2010) instead of 10...e6 (which was objectively the strongest move). The game continued 11.0-0 ed 12.♕xd4 ♕xd4 13.♗xd4 0-0-0 14.♖fd1 b6 15.♗f3 f6 16.♗e3 ♗c5 17.♗xc5 bc 18.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 19.♖d1 ♖d4 with a very promising ending. 11.de ♕xd1+ 12.♖xd1 ♘xa2 13.c5 ♘b4 14.0-0 a5 seems to be the best way of exchanging queens.

9. ... e7-e6

10. ♘e5xf7!? ♔e8xf7

It's hard to say whether the players knew about the precedent game. After 10...♕a5!? 11.♗d2 ♔xf7 12.g4 ♘f6 13.gf ♕xf5 14.♗e2 ♕xf3 15.♗xf3 e5!? (and what else!) 16.♘d6 ♕xb2+ 17.♔f3 ♗g6 18.♕g5+ ♘f6 (Santo Roman – Degraeve, Saint Affrique 2003) the endgame is unpleasant for White and instead he should have gone for head-spinning complications involving the mutual capturing of rooks: 11.♘xh8 ♘c2+ 12.♔e2 ♘xa1 13.♕h5+ ♔d8 14.c5 ♕b4 15.♘f7+ ♔e7 16.♘d6 ♕xb2+ 17.♔f3 ♗g6 18.♕g5+ ♘f6.

11. g2-g4 ♘d7-e5!?

The Spanish master plays his ace, which he counts on delivering him the initiative. After 11...♕a5 12.gf ♕xf5 13.♕xf5+ ef 14.c5 ♘f6 chances are approximately equal.

12. d4xe5 ♘b4-d3+

13. ♗f1xd3 ♕d8xd3

14. ♘a3-c2 ...

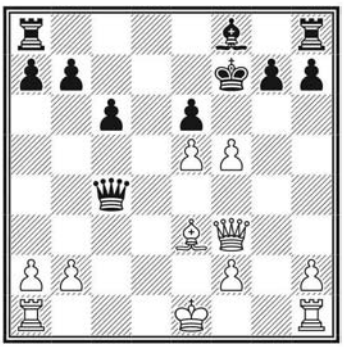
This diversionary manoeuvre (with the idea of forcing the queen off the a6-f1 diagonal) should be met by an exchange of queens: 14... ♕e4! 15.♘d4 ♗b4+ 16.♔f1 ♕xf3 17.♘xf3 ♗d3+ 18.♔g2 ♗xc4. Given the asymmetrical structure the bishop pair promises a decent future.

14. ... ♕d3xc2?!

15. g4xf5 ♕c2xc4?

After White's quiet yet very strong reply Black's rooks and bishop are unable to move until almost the

end of the game. Black should have played 15...♗b4+ 16.♔f1 ♕xf5 17.♕xf5+ ef with a likely draw.



16. a2-a3! ♖a8-d8
17. f5xe6+ ...

This is a tad too direct. After 17.♖g1! (this is where the rook belongs in any event) the f-pawn is ready to vary its plans – see for example 17...♖d7 18.♕h5+ ♔g8 19.f6 g6 20.♖xg6+! hg 21.♕xg6+ ♗g7 22.♕e8+ ♗f8 23.♕xd7 ♖xh2 24.♔d2 ♕d5+ 25.♕xd5 cd 26.♖c1 with an elementary win in the endgame.

17. ... ♔f7xe6
18. ♕f3-h3+ ♔e6xe5
19. ♖h1-g1 ♖d8-d5

The rook wants to be defended by the pawn due to the threat 20.♖g5+ ♔d6 21.♖g4 and 22.♖d4+.

20. ♖a1-c1 ♕c4-d3
21. ♖g1-g5+?! ...

Khamrakulov swaps the rook, although he could have activated it with the help of 21.♖g3! ♕e4 22.♖g4 ♕d3 23.♖f4 g5 24.♖f7. White then wins with ♕g3-f3 or by destroying the pawns on the seventh rank.

21. ... ♔e5-f6
22. ♕h3-f3+ ♔f6-e6
23. ♕f3-g4+ ♔e6-f6?!

Previously, the king headed to the center against its free will, but here for some reason he defends the central squares unnecessarily. After 23...♔f7 the computer only sees an advantage for White in the ending: 24.♖xd5 ♕xd5 25.♖d1 ♕e6 26.♖d7+ ♗e7 27.♕f4+ ♕f6 28.♕xf6+ ♔xf6 29.♗d4+ ♔e6 30.♖xb7.

24. ♖g5xd5 ♕d3xd5
25. ♖c1-d1?! ...

Winning the pawn back here is just messing around. 25.♖c4! wins in all lines: 25...c5 26.♖f4+ ♔e7 27.♕c8 b6 28.♖f5 ♕e4 29.♔d2, 25...♔f7 26.♖f4+ ♔e7 27.♖d4! or 26...♔g8 27.♕c8 ♕d6 28.♕xb7 h6 29.♕f7+ ♔h7 30.♖h4!

25. ... ♕d5-f5
26. ♕g4-d4+ ♔f6-g6
27. ♕d4xa7 ♕f5-b5
28. ♕a7-d4 h7-h5
29. ♕d4-d7 ♕b5xb2?

After 29...♔h7 30.♕d3+ ♕xd3 31.♖xd3 Black would have to defend the endgame a pawn down. Aloma Vidal prefers to capture the pawn and in so doing allows his opponent to win the game with precise geometric manoeuvres.

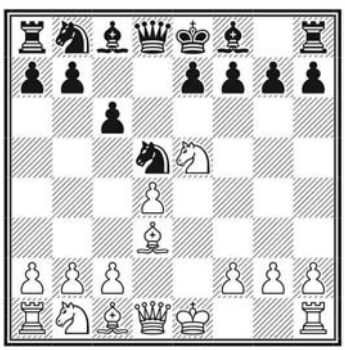
30. ♕d7-d3+ ♔g6-f7
31. ♕d3-c4+ ♔f7-g6
32. ♕c4-e4+ ♔g6-f7
33. ♖d1-d7+ ♔f7-g8

34. ♕e4-e6+ ♔g8-h7
35. ♕e6-f5+ ♔h7-g8
36. ♕f5-f7+ ♔g8-h7
37. ♕f7xh5+ ♔h7-g8
38. ♕h5-f7+ ♔g8-h7
39. ♖d1-d4 ♕b2-b1+
40. ♔e1-e2 ♕b2-b5+
41. ♔e2-f3 ♗f8-e7
42. ♕f7xe7 ♕b5-h5+
43. ♖d4-g4
1-0

All the lines considered in this chapter may be played, but they don't bring White an advantage if Black plays precisely. Now we look at what happens when White develops his light-squared bishop.

Chapter 66. 5... c6 6. ♗d3

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 d6xe5
5. ♘f3xe5 c7-c6
6. ♗f1-d3 ...



This is an unusual move, yet a perfectly natural one. It was hardly seen at all prior to the 21st century.

6. ... ♘b8-d7

Chasing the white knight in this way is the most usual move, played in the majority of games. Baburin against Short (Bunratty 2013) preferred to fianchetto: 6...g6 7.0-0 ♗g7 8.♖e1 0-0 9.a3 ♘d7 10.♘f3 b5 11.♘bd2 ♕c7 12.c4 bc 13.♗xc4 ♘7b6 14.♗a2 c5 15.dc ♕xc5 16.♘e4 ♕c6 17.♗g5 ♗xb2?! (17... ♗g4 is safer) 18.♖b1 ♗g7 19.♖c1 ♕d7 20.♘c5 ♕d8 21.♗xe7! ♘xe7 22.♕xd8 ♖xd8 23.♖xe7 – White returned the material and subsequently won a pawn and the game. Black is advised to carry out the standard attack with his c-pawn without advancing its neighbor – 10...c5!? 11.c4 ♘c7 12.d5 e6 13.♘c3 ♘f6 14.de ♘xe6 with equality.

7. ♘e5-f3 ...

The exchange of knights is analyzed in Game 76. If 7.f4 the game can continue 7...♘b4 8.♗e4 (8.♗c4?! ♘xe5 9.fe? ♕xd4!) 8... ♘f6 9.a3 ♘xe4 10.ab ♗f5 and Black has the advantage of the bishop pair.

As usual, changing the structure with 7.0-0 ♘xe5 8.de slightly improves Black's position. Now, the continuation 8...♘b4 9.♗e4 ♕xd1

10.♖xd1 leads to the exchange of queens. Continuing, the young Carlsen found himself the victim of a nasty squeeze by Sutovsky (Rethymno 2003) after 10...f5 11.a3 ♘a6 12.♗f3 g6 13.♘d2 ♗e6 14.♗e2 ♘c7?! 15.♘f3 ♗d5 16.♘d4 ♗g7 17.c4 ♗f7 18.f4 ♘e6 19.♘f3 ♖d8 20.♗e3 0-0 21.b4 a6 22.g3, however, after 14...0-0-0 White's general mobilization isn't as smooth. Approximate equality is retained after 10...g6 11.c3 ♘a6 12.♗e3 ♗g7 13.f4 g5!? 14.g3 gf 15.gf (Thornert – Bator, Sweden 2011) 15...h5 16.♔f2 ♗g4 17.♖d3 ♗h6 18.♘d2 ♘c7.

With the opening of the d-file it's hard to avoid simplifications and an insipid game, such as with 8...g6 9.c3 ♗g7 10.♖e1 0-0 11.♘a3 ♗e6 12.♘c2 c5 13.♗e4 ♕d7 14.♘e3 ♖ad8 15.♘xd5 ♗xd5 16.♗xd5 ♕xd5 17.♕xd5 ♗xd5 18.f4 f6 19.ef ef 20.♗e3 b6 21.a4 f5 (Sutovsky – Mamedyarov, Gothenburg 2005). Another game of interest continued 8...♗e6 9.♘d2 g6 10.♘f3 ♗g7 – White cannot make two prophylactic moves at the same time. After 11.a3 ♗g4 12.♖e1 ♕c7 13.c4 ♘b6 14.♗f4 0-0-0 15.♕e2 ♘d7 White is tied to defending the e5 pawn, while the line 11.h3 ♘b4 12.♗e4 ♗c4 13.♕xd8+ ♖xd8 14.♖e1 ♗d5 15.♗d2 ♘xc2! 16.♗xc2 ♗xf3 17.♗e3 ♗d5 18.♗xa7 ♗e6 19.♖e2 0-0 20.♗c5 led to the players agreeing a draw in Adams versus Short (London 2008).

7. ... ♘d7-f6

The position is of a closed nature and Black is entitled to mobilize his queenside earlier than his kingside. After 7...g6 8.0-0 ♗g7 9.c4 ♘b4 10.♗e2 0-0 11.a3 ♘a6 12.♘c3 ♘b6 13.h3 ♘c7 14.♗e3 ♗f5 15.♖c1 ♘c8 16.♕b3 ♘d6 17.a4 ♗e6 18.d5 cd 19.cd ♗d7 20.♖fd1 b5?! 21.cb ♘cxb5 22.♕a2 ♖b8 23.♗f4 ♖c8 24.♘e5 g5 25.♗h2 ♗xe5 26.♗xe5 (R.Mamedov – Shanava, Baku 2013) Black's b-pawn charge was not a good idea given that he had a somewhat worse position.

8. h2-h3 ...

This is useful prophylaxis, as demonstrated when compared with the line 8.0-0 ♗g4 9.♘bd2 ♘b4 10.♗c4 e6 11.c3 ♘bd5 12.h3 ♗xf3 13.♘xf3 ♕c7 14.♖e1 ♗d6 and Black has comfortable equality.

8. ... ♘d5-b4

This is to win back the f5 square for the bishop. Continuing 8...e6 9.0-0 c5 is too early to support the development of the queenside. For example, 10.a3 cd 11.♘xd4 ♗d6 12.c4 ♘f4 13.♗c2 0-0 14.♕f3 e5 15.♘b5 ♖b8 16.♖d1 ♕e7 17.♗xf4 ef 18.♘1c3 (Nevednichy – F.Grunberg, Brasov 2004) – the bishops don't fully compensate for the deformation of the pawns.

9. ♗d3-c4 ...

After 9.♗e2 the c2 square needs to be defended by the knight from a3. That said, this is only fleetingly inconvenient, and Navara versus Rozentalis (Greece 2006) retained

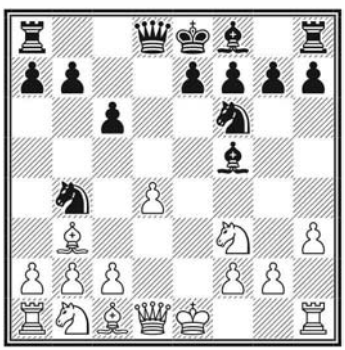
a slight advantage: 9...♗f5 10.♘a3 e6 11.0-0 ♗e7 12.c3 ♘bd5 13.♘c4 0-0 14.♘ce5 h6 15.c4 ♘b6 16.♕b3 ♕c8 17.♖d1 ♖d8 18.♗f4 c5 19.♗d3 ♗xd3 20.♖xd3 cd 21.♖ad1 ♕c5 22.♖xd4 ♖xd4 23.♖xd4. The Lithuanian Grandmaster skillfully resisted the unleashing of the enemy army and eventually secured a draw.

9. ... ♗c8-f5

10. ♗c4-b3 ...

If 10.♘a3 the knight will probably not continue its career via c4 (as the bishop already sits on that square), but via c2. White is not forbidden from carrying out these long manoeuvres, but they don't promise much. The blitz game Adams – Carlsen (Moscow 2007) continued 10...e6 11.c3 ♘bd5 12.♘c2 ♗e7 13.♘e3 ♗g6 (13...♘xe3 14.♗xe3 ♗e4 was more precise) 14.♘e5 0-0 15.0-0 ♘xe3 16.♗xe3 ♘d5 17.♗d2 c5 18.♘xg6 hg 19.dc ♗xc5 20.♕e2 ♘f6 21.♖ad1 ♕c7 22.♗b3 ♖ad8 – and the bishop pair were neutralized by the activity of Black's pieces given the asymmetrical structure.

White chases the knight from b4, and then from d5 (although the latter manoeuvre reduces the power of White's light-squared bishop). Two practical examples are clearly insufficient to evaluate this position. After 10...a5 11.a3 ♘bd5 12.0-0 e6 13.c4 ♘c7 14.♘c3 ♗e7 15.♕e2 h6 16.♖d1 0-0 17.♗f4 ♖e8 18.♖d2 (Gallagher – Hristodoulou, Plovdiv 2012) the weakening of the queenside is quite noticeable, and therefore one should follow the example of Bogdanovski in his game versus Ovetchkin (Plovdiv 2008): 10...e6 11.a3 ♘bd5 12.0-0 ♗d6 13.♘bd2 ♕c7 14.♖e1 0-0 15.♘h4 ♕d6 16.♘f1 ♖fe8 17.♘xf5 ef 18.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 19.c4 ♘f4 20.♗e3 ♘e6 21.d5 cd 22.cd ♘c5 23.♗c4 f4 24.♗d4 ♗b6. The white pawns have literally confused the poor knight. A passed pawn has been created to complement the advantage of the bishop pair – but the powerful blockade cancels all of that out!

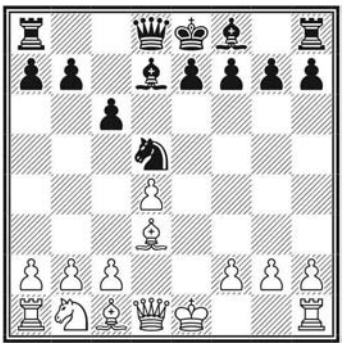


Game 76

V.Topalov – M.Carlsen

Morelia 2008

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**d6xe5**
5.	**♘f3xe5**	**c7-c6**
6.	**♗f1-d3**	**♘b8-d7**
7.	**♘e5xd7**	**♗c8xd7**



The exchange has made Black's piece development easier, but White has also freed up his hands to a certain extent and can carry out his plan without worrying about the danger posed to his centralized knight.

8. 0-0 g7-g6

The light-squared bishop will not travel further for now, so it's time to worry about the future of the dark-squared bishop. The miniature game Adams – Maki Uuro (Izmir 2004) serves as a poor advert for the passive 8...e6?! – 9.c4 ♘f6 10.♘c3 ♗e7 11.♗f4 0-0 12.♕e2 c5? 13.dc ♗xc5 14.♖ad1 ♕b6 15.♗e5! (the same move would have won a pawn in response to 14...♕e7) 15...♗c6? 16.♗xf6 gf 17.♗xh7+! ♔xh7 18.♕h5+, and only giving up the queen avoids an immediate checkmate.

9. ♘b1-d2 ...

After 9.c4 ♘f6 10.h3 ♗g7 11.♘d2 0-0 12.♘f3 ♕c7 13.♖e1 ♗f5 14.♗xf5 gf 15.♗e3 ♖ad8 16.♕c2 e6 17.♖ad1 ♘e4 18.♕c1 ♔h8 19. ♗f4 ♕e7 20.♕e3 (A.Zhigalko – Rozentalis, Cappelle-la-Grande 2006) Black has not yet gained equality. As we already know, 9... ♘b6!? is more interesting, in order to attack the c4 pawn by the bishop from e6 and to attack the d4 pawn by the bishop from g7.

Much more often, White prefers to create a strong chain with a pawn on c3. If 9.♖e1 ♗g7 10.c3 0-0 11.♗g5 ♖e8 12.♘d2 ♕c7 13.♘c4 c5 14.♕f3 ♗e6 15.♘e5 cd 16.cd ♕b6 17.♖ad1 ♖ad8 18.h4?! ♘b4 19.♗b1 ♖xd4 20.♖xd4 ♕xd4 21.♕xb7 ♗xe5 22.♕b5 ♖d8 23.♖xe5 (A.Muzychuk – Zhao Xue, Krasnoturinsk 2007) 23...♕xb2 24.♖e1 ♕c3 25.♖c1 ♕a3 Black emerges a pawn up with a good position. The standard attack with c6-c5 was executed successfully; the moves 13.♗c4, 13.♕b3 and 13.♕f3 all make c6-c5 impossible but they allow e7-e5.

9. ... ♗f8-g7
10. ♘d2-f3 0-0
11. ♖f1-e1 ...

Kulaots played the atypical transfer of the queen to the kingside (and rendering the pin ♗d7-g4 harmless) versus Heim (Gausdal 2003): 11.♕d2 a5 12.a3 a4 13.♕g5!? ♖c8 14.♖d1 b5 15.♕h4 e6 16.♗g5 f6 17.♗d2 ♖f7 18.♕e4 c5 19.c3 cd 20.cd ♗f8 21.h4 ♗d6. Black's position is nevertheless solid, which has much to do with his excellent knight. 11...♗g4 12.♘e5 ♗e6 neutralizes the queen's manoeuvre

and immediately leads to equal chances.

11. ... ♗c8-g4

12. c2-c3 ...

In view of Black's next move he should have considered 12.♗c2.



12. ... c6-c5!

13. ♗d3-e4 ...

Topalov agrees to the creation of an isolated pawn, being unwilling to entertain complications with 13.dc ♘xc3! The computer calculates this position to be equal: 14.bc ♗xc3 15.♗h6 ♗xe1 16.♕xe1 (16.♗xf8 ♔xf8 17.♗e4 ♕xd1 18.♖xd1 ♗a5 19.♗xb7 ♖b8 20.♗e4 ♖b2 is weaker) 16...♕xd3 17.♘e5 ♕d4 18.c6!? ♗e2!? 19.♘d7 ♖fe8 20.cb ♖ad8 21.b8♕ ♖xb8 22.♘xb8 ♖xb8 23.♖c1 ♕e4 24.♗e3 winning back the pawn.

13. ... c5xd4

14. c3xd4 e7-e6

15. ♕d1-b3?! ...

Veselin unexpectedly rejects clinging on to the weakness. Even though it's his only and easily defendable one.

15. ... ♗g4xf3

16. ♗e4xf3 ♗g7xd4

17. ♗f3xd5 ...

17.♕xb7?! ♕a5 18.♖d1 ♖ab8 19.♕c6 ♖fc8 20.♕d6 ♖d8 21.♕g3 ♗xb2 is no good (Mikhalchishin, Stetsko). It is worth testing 17.♖e2!?, simultaneously covering b2 and f2. For example, after 17... ♕b6 18.♗g5 ♕xb3 19.ab ♗g7 20.♖d2 h6 21.♗xd5 hg 22.♗xb7 ♖fd8 23.♖ad1 ♖xd2 24.♖xd2 ♖b8 25.♖d7 the opposite-colored bishops should save White.

17. ... ♕d8xd5

18. ♕b3xd5 e6xd5

19. ♖e1-d1 ♗d4-g7

20. ♔g1-f1 ...

After 20.♖xd5 ♖fd8 21.♖xd8+ (21.♖d2 ♖ac8) 21...♖xd8 22.♗e3 ♗xb2 23.♖b1 b6 taking the bishop leads to getting mated, so Black retains his extra pawn. The rest of the game is a matter of technique.

20. ... ♖f8-d8

21. ♗c1-g5 ♖d8-d7

22. ♖d1-d2 h7-h6

23. ♗g5-e3 d5-d4

24. ♖d2-d3 ♖a8-c8

25. ♗e3-d2 ...

Mikhalchishin and Stetsko consider it possible to overcome the drawing tendency in the rook ending after 25.♖c1 ♖dd8! 26.♖cd1 ♖c2 27.♖3d2 ♖dc8! 28.♗xd4 ♗xd4 29.♖xd4 ♖xb2 30.♖4d2 ♖xd2 31.♖xd2 b5 32.♔e2 ♖c3 33.♖d3 ♖c2+ 34.♖d2 ♖c4. The 17-year-old Carlsen had not yet perfected his enchanting endgame technique

and the Bulgarian should have tested him.

25.	**...**	**♖c8-c2**
26.	**♖a1-b1**	**♖d7-e7**
27.	**a2-a4**	**f7-f5**
28.	**b2-b3**	**♖e7-c7**
29.	**♗d2-e1**	**♔g8-f7**
30.	**♖d3-d2**	**♖c2-c1+**
31.	**♖b1xc1**	**♖c8xc1+**
32.	**♔f1-e2**	**♖c1-b1**
33.	**♖d2-d3**	**♔f7-e6**
34.	**h2-h4**	**♔e6-d5**
35.	**♗e1-d2**	**♔d5-e4**
36.	**♖d3-g3**	**f5-f4**
37.	**♖g3-d3**	**...**

The rook cannot yet touch the enemy pawn due to 37...d3 mate. The climax is close.

37.	**...**	**♗g7-e5**
38.	**f2-f3+**	**♔e4-d5**
39.	**♗g3-e1**	**♗e5-d6**
40.	**♗e1-d2**	**g6-g5**
41.	**h4xg5**	**h6xg5**
42.	**♗d2-e1**	**g5-g4!**
43.	**f3xg4**	**...**

Topalov believed getting into zugzwang in the line 43.♗f2 ♗e5 44.♗e1 g3 45.a5 ♗d6 46.♗c3 ♗c5 47.♗e1 ♔e5 was too humiliating. Indeed, it looks heartbreaking!

43.	**...**	**♔d5-e4**

0-1

Despite White's intrigues, Black's light-squared bishop comes into play and his king manages to find shelter on the kingside. White's advantage is minor.

Chapter 67. 5... c6 6. ♗c4

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**d6xe5**
5.	**♘f3xe5**	**c7-c6**
6.	**♗f1-c4**	**...**



This move is less useful than against 5...g6, as the bishop hits against the newly defended knight. Nevertheless, it's influence along the a2-g8 diagonal is palpable, as can be seen from the variation 6... ♗f5 7.♘xf7!? ♔xf7 8.♕f3. Tim Taylor assigned a question-mark against ♗c8-f5, while assigning the knight sacrifice an exclamation-mark, and condemning Black to either returning the piece or else falling victim to a crushing attack (presumably, if he plays 8...♔g6). However, 8...e6 9.g4 ♕f6 10.gf ♕xf5 looks fine. Instead, White usually castles, making do with his

standard spatial advantage: 7.0-0 ♘d7 (7...e6?! 8.♕h5!) 8.♗d3 ♗xd3 9.♘xd3 e6 10.c4 ♘5f6 11.♘c3 ♗e7 12.b3 0-0 13.♕f3 ♖e8 14.♗f4 (Burg – De Jager, Haarlem 2012).

6. ... ♘b8-d7

There is also an interesting modification available: 6...♗e6 7.0-0 ♘d7. In the game Nikolova – Genocchio (Cutro 2009) Black was able to set up his pieces nicely and had no problems after 8.♘xd7 (8.♘f3 should obviously be met with 8...♗g4 and e7-e6) 8...♕xd7 9.♗b3 ♗g4 10.♕e1 e6 11.h3 ♗f5 12.a3 a5 13.♕e2 a4 14.♗a2 ♗e7 15.c4 ♘c7 16.♗e3 ♗f6 17.♖d1 0-0 18.♘c3 ♖fd8.

7. ♘e5-f3 ...

White needs to avoid exchanging his knight if he wants to extract anything from his spatial dominance. Were he to allow an exchange on e5 then neither player will gain control of the open file: 7.0-0 ♘xe5 8.de ♗f5 9.♗b3 e6 10.♕e2 ♗e7 11.♖d1 ♕c7 12.c4 ♘b6 13.♘c3 0-0 14.♗f4 ♘d7 15.♖ac1 ♘c5 16.♗c2 ♗xc2 17.♕xc2 a5 (Valsecchi – Gajic, Gibraltar 2014). After 7.♘c3 massive simplifications are likely to ensure, as in the example of Alekseenko – Levin (St. Petersburg 2013): 7...♘xe5 8.de ♗e6 9.♗xd5 ♗xd5 10.♘xd5 ♕xd5 11.♕xd5 cd 12.♔e2 ♖c8 13.♗e3 a6 14.♖ac1 e6 15.♖fd1 b5 16.c3 ♗c5 17.a4 ♔d7 18.ab ab 19.♗xc5 ♖xc5 20.♖a1 ♖hc8. All attempts by White to increase the marginal advantage ended in vain.

Nevostrujev versus Yakimov (Pavlodar 2013) himself chose to exchange the knight, followed by charging through the center: 7.♘xd7 ♗xd7 8.0-0 ♗f5 9.♗g5 h6 10.♗h4 ♕d7 11.♗b3 e6 12.c4 ♘f6 (12...♘b4!?) 13.d5 ♗e7 14.dc ♕xd1 15.♖xd1 bc 16.♗a4 ♖c8 17.f3 ♘d7 18.♗f2 ♘c5 19.♗b3 0-0 20.♗xc5 ♗xc5 21.♔f1 ♖fd8 22.♘c3 ♗d4 23.♘a4 h5 – and Black had grabbed the initiative. Finally, Fier in his game with Bogdanovski (Istanbul 2012) attempted to prevent Black from breaking out with 7.♘d3, but ultimately he was unable to stave off Black's burst for freedom – 7... ♘7f6 8.c3 ♗f5 9.♕e2 e6 10.♘d2 ♗d6 11.♘f3 0-0 12.0-0 ♕c7 13.♗b3 h6 14.h3 ♖fd8 15.♘fe5 c5 16.dc ♗xc5 17.♘xc5 ♕xc5 18.♘g4 ♘xg4 19.hg ♗g6 20.♕e5 ♕c6 21.♖d1 a6 22.♗d2 b5 23.♖ac1 ♘b6 24.g5 hg 25.♗xg5 ♖xd1+ 26.♖xd1 ♘c4 27.♗xc4 bc with equality. Black could have opted for a more complicated struggle with 15...b6, in order to recapture with the pawn after c6-c5.

7. ... ♘d7-f6

This is probably somewhat stronger than 7...♘7b6 (Game 77). The bishop isn't so threatening on c4 that it has to be chased away; at the same time the kingside won't suffer from having an extra defender.

Grandmaster Luther has played 7...e6 8.0-0 b5 9.♗d3 ♗b7 in a

number of games, in order to then use the standard c6-c5 to open up lines for his bishop. This enabled him to equalize against Lutz (Essen 2002): 10.♖e1 ♗e7 11.♘bd2 0-0 12.♘e4 a6 13.♗g5 ♗xg5 14.♘fxg5 h6 15.♘f3 c5 16.c4 bc 17.♗xc4 ♕e7 18.♖c1 cd 19.♕xd4 ♖fd8 20.♗f1 a5 21.♘e5 ♘xe5 22.♕xe5 ♗a6 23.♗xa6 ♖xa6. However, an energetic attack on his pawn chain makes Luther's plan questionable: 10.a4 a6 11.♖e1 ♗e7 12.♘bd2 ♕b6 13.c4 bc 14.♘xc4 ♕c7 15.♗g5 c5 16.♖c1 0-0 17.♗xe7 ♘xe7 18.♘ce5 (Iordachescu – Wohl, France 2002) – and it's hard to see a good move for Black.

8. h2-h3 ...

Socko against Baburin (Dresden 2008) continued 8.0-0 ♗g4 9.♘bd2 e6 10.h3 ♗h5 11.♖e1 ♗e7 12.♗f1 0-0 13.g4 ♗g6 14.♘e5 ♘d7 15.♘xg6 hg 16.c4 ♘5b6 17.♘f3 c5 18.♗e3 cd 19.♗xd4 ♗f6. White's kingside activity has failed to earn meaningful dividends, and Black, liquidating his opponent's bishop pair advantage, managed to achieve equality. 16...♘5f6 was also fine, staying close to the king.

8. ... ♗c8-f5

9. 0-0 e7-e6

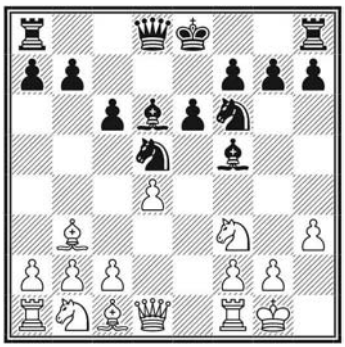
9...h6 prevents White from swapping the bishop with ♘f3-h4, but this procrastination with development has its own drawbacks. After 10.♗d3 ♗xd3 11.♕xd3 e6 12.c4 the knight doesn't have anywhere good to retreat and White grabs the initiative. Godena gained a better position against Burkart after 12...♘b6 13.♗f4 ♗e7 14.♘c3 0-0 15.♖ad1 ♘bd7 16.♖fe1 ♖e8 17.♘e5 ♕a5 18.♘xd7 ♘xd7 19.d5 ♘f8 20.♕g3 ♔h8? 21.d6 ♗d8 22.d7 ♖e7 23.♗d6, although Black's obvious blunder helped considerably. Black should have played 20...ed 21.cd ♗f6 22.♖xe8 ♖xe8 23.♗xh6 ♗xc3 24.bc ♘g6 25.dc bc 26.♗e3 ♕xa2, after which he has at least regained material equality.

10. ♗c4-b3 ...

10.♘h4 ♗g6 11.♘xg6 hg is not to be recommended, especially due to ♕d8-c7 followed by castling long with potential threats thanks to the semi-open file. Further, the improvement 10...♗e4 11.f3 ♗g6 12.♘xg6 hg is even more promising for Black.

The blitz game Shirov – Carlsen (Moscow 2007) continued 10.♗g5 ♗e7 11.♘bd2 h6 12.♗xf6 ♘xf6 13.c3 0-0 14.♗b3 c5 15.♗c2 ♗xc2 16.♕xc2 ♖c8 17.♕b3 ♕c7 18.♖fe1 ♖fd8 19.♖ad1 cd 20.♘xd4 ♗c5 21.♘2f3 ♖d5 22.c4 ♖d7 23.♘b5 ♕b6. Black has successfully broken free with c6-c5 and is clearly better with the bishop pair and domination of dark squares. After 24.♖e2? (White had to play 24.♕c2) 24... ♖xd1+ 25.♕xd1 ♗xf2+! 26.♖xf2 ♘e4 27.♕d4 ♕xd4 28.♘fxd4 ♘xf2 29.♔xf2 ♖xc4 Magnus forced a transposition to a technically won ending.

10. ... ♗f8-d6



The black pieces are set up harmoniously here and steadily maintain equality. In response to 11.c4 Black could continue 11... ♘e7 12.♘c3 (after 12.♘h4 ♗c7 exchanging the bishop forces White to lose his central pawn) 12...h6 13.♗c2 0-0 14.b3 ♕a5 15.♗b2 ♖fd8 16.♕e2 ♗xc2 17.♕xc2 ♕f5 18.♕xf5 ♘xf5 (Kindermann – Loeffler, Germany 2007). After 11.♘bd2 0-0 12.♘h4 ♘e7 13.♘xf5 ♘xf5 14.c3 c5 Smirin accepted Nakamura's draw offer (Philadelphia 2009), as his position wasn't good enough to take advantage of the bishop pair, even though the game had opened up a little.

Game 77

F.Caruana – I.Salgado Lopez

Rijeka 2010

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**d6xe5**
5.	**♘f3xe5**	**c7-c6**
6.	**♗f1-c4**	**♘b8-d7**
7.	**♘e5-f3**	**♘d7-b6**



This move was first played by Miles against van der Weide (Saint Vincent 2000). It was later adopted by a number of Alekhine devotees (Conquest, Baburin, Konopka and M.Grunberg) as well as a number of Chinese players.

8. ♗c4-e2 ...

This is not the most popular continuation. However, after it retreats to b3 the bishop doesn't have much opportunity to make an impact. For example, 8.♗b3 ♗g4 9.h3 ♗f5 10.g4 ♗g6 11.♘e5 ♘d7 12.♘xg6 hg 13.c4 ♘5f6 14.♗f4 ♕a5 15.♘c3 0-0-0 16.♗d2 e5 17.d5 ♗b4 18.g5 ♘h5 (Zhang Zhong – Ye Jiangchuan, China 2005) or 8... ♗f5 9.0-0 e6 10.♖e1 ♗e7 11.♘bd2 a5 12.a3 a4 13.♗e2 0-0 14.♘e4 h6 15.♘g3 ♗h7 16.c4 ♘f6 17.c5 ♘bd5 18.♗d2 b6 19.♕c1 bc 20.dc ♕c7 21.♘e5 ♖fd8 22.♗b1 ♗xb1 23.♖xb1 ♘d7 24.♘d3 (Karpa-

tchev – Mainka, Bad Woerishofen 2009) – White clearly doesn't have any advantage in either case.

8. ... ♗c8-g4

After 8...♗f5 9.0-0 e6 10.a3 ♗e7 11.c4 ♘f6 12.h3 ♕c7 13.♖e1 0-0 14.♘c3 White gains the standard advantage of four ranks versus three.

9. 0-0 e7-e6

10. h2-h3 ♗g4-h5

Unlike in the 5...g6 system, the bishop is not forced to swap itself for the enemy knight, as the g6 square is available for it. This is a very important difference! That said, Black's position remains solid if he does go for the exchange: 10...♗xf3 11.♗xf3 ♗e7 12.b3 0-0 13.c4 ♘f6 14.♗b2 ♕c7 15.♕e2 ♖fe8 16.♖e1 ♗f8 17.♘d2 g6 18.g3 ♗g7 19.♗g2 ♖ad8 20.♘f3 ♘bd7 (Vallejo – Johannessen, Germany 2010) – once again, White controls four ranks while Black only has three to manoeuvre in.

11. ♘f3-e5 ...

This looks sensible. There is no need to postpone dealing with the potential exchange on f3 (for example, after Black has rearranged his pieces with ♗f8-d6-c7 and ♕d8-d6).

11. ... ♗h5xe2

12. ♕d1xe2 ♗f8-e7

13. c2-c4 ♘d5-f6

14. ♖f1-d1 0-0

15. ♘b1-c3 a7-a5

After 15...♘bd7 the game transposes to the line after 4... ♗g4 5.h3 ♗h5 6.♗e2 e6 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.♘e5 ♗xe2 9.♕xe2 0-0 10.c4 ♘f6 11.♖d1 ♘bd7 12.♘c3 c6. The statistics for Black here are disappointing – his passivity is punished more than his solidity rewarded in by far the majority of games. Although, for example, after 16.♗f4 ♖e8 17.♖d3 ♕a5 18.♖ad1 ♖ad8 19.a3 ♕a6 20.♕f3 (20.b4!?) 20...♘b6 21.c5 ♘bd5 22.♗g5 ♖fe8 (Jakovenko – Bu Xiangzhi, Nizhny Novgorod 2007) it's still unclear how White can penetrate his opponent's buttress.

The rising star of Spanish chess isn't one for faffing around along three ranks, however, and hence he fights back to regain space on the queenside.

16. ♗c1-f4 a5-a4

17. ♖d1-d3 ♖f8-e8

18. ♖a1-d1 ♘b8-d7

19. ♕d1-f3 ♕d8-a5

White's build up has been focused on supporting d4-d5, and the consequences of breaking through in the center needed accurate calculation. In the line 20...♘xe5 21.♗xe5 ed 22.cd ♘xd5 23.♘xd5 cd 24.♖xd5 ♕a6 it's not easy to convert this activity into something concrete. Caruana is right to prefer a pawn storm on the kingside.

20. g2-g4 h7-h6

21. h3-h4 ♘d7xe5

22. d4xe5 ♘f6-h7

23. g4-g5 ...

Invading along the opened up file surprisingly promises very little. After 23.♖d7 ♘f8 24.♖xb7 ♕a6

25.♖c7 ♖ac8 26.♖xc8 ♖xc8 Black has counterplay for the lost pawn.

23. ... a4-a3
24. b2-b3 ♖a8-d8

It would have been better to do this after exchanging pawns. Black is soon forced to give up a piece, but after 24...hg 25.hg ♖ad8 26.♕h5 ♖xd3 27.♖xd3 ♗xg5 28.♗xg5 ♕xe5 29.f4 ♕f5 30.♕h3 he retains chances to save the game either in the middlegame (30...♕g6), or the endgame (30...♕xh3 31.♖xh3 ♘xg5 32.fg ♖d8).

25. g5xh6 g7-g6?

Now the invasion will prove decisive. Black needed to play 25...♖xd3 26.♖xd3 ♖d8 27.♖xd8+ ♕xd8 28.hg ♕d4, and he could have struggled on.

26. ♖d1-d7 ♖d8xd7
27. ♖d1xd7 ♗e7xh4
28. ♖d7xb7 ♖e8-f8
29. ♘c3-e4 ♕a5-e1+
30. ♔g1-g2 ♕e1-b1

Caruana didn't have to worry about losing the central pawn after 30...♕a1 31.♗e3 ♕xe5 in view of 32.♗c5 winning the exchange.

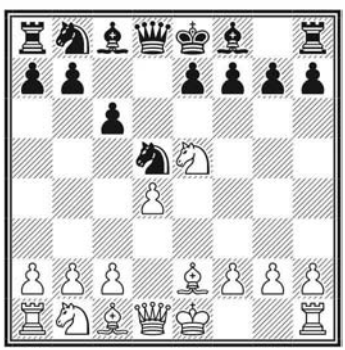
31. ♗f4-e3 f7-f5
32. e5xf6 ♘h7xf6
33. ♘e4xf6+ ♗h4xf6
34. h6-h7+ ♔g8-h8
35. ♗e3-h6
1-0

This demonstrates that Black can confidently equalize against 6.♗c4 by playing 6...♘d7 7.♘f3 ♘7f6, with the successful development of first the queen's bishop and then the king's bishop.

Chapter 68. 5...c6 6.♗e2 g6 and 6...♘d7

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 d6xe5
5. ♘f3xe5 c7-c6
6. ♗f1-e2 ...

This is the main line and has been played in a large number of games between strong players. Therefore, it seems sensible to split the analysis between variations with the fianchetto (the current chapter) and 6...♗f5 most likely followed by e7-e6 (the next chapter).



6. ... ♘b8-d7

Compared with 6...g6 (Game

78) this knight development is more elastic, although those lines frequently merge.

7. ♘e5-f3 ...

Retreating with 7.♘d3 is considered earlier: 7...g6 8.♘d2 ♗g7 9.♘f3 merges with the line 6.♘d2 ♘d7 7.♘d3 g6 8.♘f3 ♗g7 9.♗e2. After 7.0-0 ♘xe5 8.de ♗f5 9.a3 e6 10.c4 ♘b6 11.♗e3 ♗e7 12.♘c3 0-0 13.f4 ♕xd1 (13...♕c7 followed by ♖a8-d8 is also fine) 14.♖axd1 ♖fd8 15.g4 ♗c2 16.♖c1 ♗d3 17.♗xd3 ♖xd3 18.♗xb6 ab 19.♖cd1 ♖ad8 20.♖xd3 ♖xd3 21.♖d1 ♖f3 22.♖d4 g5!? (Meijers – Zilberman, Dieren 2000) Black has no problems. If 7.c4, then apart from 7...♘c7 (which is likely to transpose into the main line), 7...♘xe5 8.cd ♘g6 9.dc bc 10.♗f3 ♗b7 11.0-0 e6 12.♘c3 ♗e7 13.g3 0-0 14.♗e3 ♖b8 16.♖e1 f5!? is also good (Robson – Ramirez, USA 2011). 12.♗e3 and ♘b1-d2 is probably stronger, planning a frontal attack on the c-pawn.

7. ... g7-g6

For 7...♘7f6 please refer to Game 79. In both a blitz game with Najer (Khanty-Mansiysk 2005) as well as a blind game with Anand (Nice 2008) Shakhriyar Mamedyarov has played 7...♕c7. The queen supports the knight's invasion at f4, moreover, Black should wait to be chased with c2-c4, so that the bishop on e2 doesn't escape the swap on c4. Anand and Mamedyarov continued 8.0-0 e6 9.c4 ♘f4 10.♘c3 ♗e7 11.♖e1 ♘xe2+ 12.♕xe2 0-0 13.♗g5 ♗xg5 14.♘xg5 h6 15.♘f3 b6 16.♕e3 ♗a6 17.b3 ♖ad8 18.♘e4 c5 with chances to equalize. The jury is still out on ♗c1-g5, as simplifications are to be welcomed by Black in a cramped position.

8. 0-0 ...

Rosino versus Stull (Velden 2009) waited a bit before castling, but was unable to find a more appropriate place for his king: 8.c4 ♘c7 9.♘c3 ♗g7 10.♗e3 0-0 11.♕d2 ♘f6 12.h3 ♗f5 13.♗h6 ♘e4 14.♘xe4 ♗xe4 15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.0-0 ♗xf3 17.♗xf3 e6 18.♖fd1 ♕d6 19.b4 ♖fd8 20.♕b2 ♔g8 21.a4 a6 22.a5, ½ - ½. Exchanging the dark-squared bishops reduced pressure along the long diagonal, but it proved impossible to exploit the holes on the kingside.

8. ... ♗f8-g7

9. c2-c4 ♘d5-c7

After 9...♘5f6 10.♘c3 0-0 11.h3 ♘b6 12.a4 ♗f5?! (J.Polgar – Visser, Amsterdam 1990) 13.a5 ♘c8 14.a6 b6 15.♘e5 Black's queenside was torn apart. Therefore, he should have put off the bishop's development (12...a5) or else moved it to the modest b7 square (after 11...b6).

10. ♘b1-c3 0-0

11. ♗c1-e3 ...

11.♗f4 ♘e6 12.♗e3 (11.♗g5 ♘e6 12.♗e3) is also interesting, in order to divert the knight to e6 and in so doing to prevent Black from playing e7-e5. Statistics here

are unkind to Black, and even Mamedyarov in his game with Bauer (Merida 2005) only managed to break out (and eventually win) after 12...♘f6 13.h3 b6 14.♕b3 ♕c7 15.♖fe1 ♗b7 16.♖ad1 ♖fd8 17.♗f1 a6 18.a4 thanks to a small miracle.

In reply to 11.♗f4 Black has also played 11...c5 with a solid blockade, as in the example of Tiviakov – Baburin (Port Erin 1999): 12.dc ♘e6 13.♗e3 ♗xc3 14.bc ♘dxc5 15.♘d4 ♗d7 16.♗f3 ♖c8 17.♘xe6 ♗xe6 18.♕d4 ♖e8 19.♗d5 b6 20.♖ad1 ♗xd5 21.cd ♕d7 22.c4 ♘b7 23.♖c1 ♘d6. But the much stronger move 12.d5!? forced Zoltan Varga into mounting a difficult defense against Navara (Bilbao 2014) after 12...e5 13.♗g5 f6 14.♗e3 ♖f7 15.♘e4 ♕f8 16.b4 b6 17.bc ♘xc5 18.♘xc5 bc. Black's king's bishop is so pitiful that maybe Black should have swapped it and then set up a blockade – 12... ♗xc3!? 13.bc e5.

11. ... e7-e5

This attack on the center changes the usual flow of events – drawn out manoeuvres with White holding a spatial advantage. After 11...b6 12.♕d2 ♗b7 13.♖ad1 ♘f6 14.♗f4 ♘e6 15.♗e5 ♕d7 16.h3 ♖fd8 17.♕d3 ♕e8 18.♘h2 (S.Kasparov – Tsyhanchuk, St. Petersburg 2011) it would have been useful for Black to exchange bishops via 18...♘d7 19.♗xg7 ♘xg7. He doesn't have much to fear from a kingside attack.

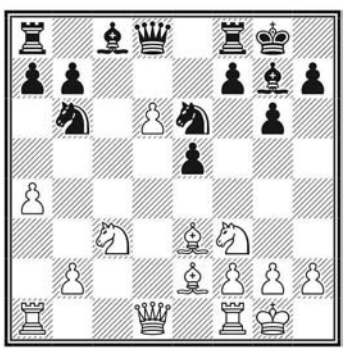
12. d4-d5 ...

It makes sense to reach a conclusion in the center. Solodovnichenko versus Vezzosi (Italy 2011) gained the advantage of the bishop pair without achieving any real dividends – 12.♗g5 ♗f6 13.♗h6 ♖e8 14.♘e4 ed 15.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 16.♗g5 ♕d6 17.♘xd4 ♘c5 18.♗f3 ♘7e6 19.♗e3 ♘xd4 20.♕xd4 ♕xd4 21.♗xd4 ♘e6 22.♗f6 ♘f8. But after 16...♕f5!? 17.♕d2 ♘e6 18.♗d3 ♕c5 it's worth checking whether this same advantage compensates for the pawn.

12. ... c6xd5

Mertanen in his game with Rade (Kallithea 2008) blocked the position after 12...f5 13.♗g5 ♗f6 14.♗h6 ♗g7 15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.♕d2 c5 17.♖fd1 h6 18.a3 ♘e8 19.b4 e4 20.♘e1 b6 21.f4, and here with the help of 21...♘d6 he should have taken his plan to its logical conclusion. This method is appropriate in situations when Black is happy to draw.

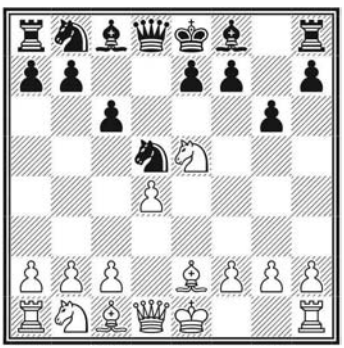
13. c4xd5 ♘d7-b6
14. d5-d6 ♘c7-e6
15. a2-a4 ...



15...♘d4?! 16.a5! ♘xf3+ 16. ♗xf3 ♘c4 17.♗c5 is ill-advised, and Black should equalize chances by following the example of the game Kreizberg – Zilberman (Israel 2000): 15...♗d7 16.a5 ♘c8 17.♗c4 ♗c6 18.♗xe6 fe 19.♘g5 ♕xd6 20.♕xd6 ♘xd6 21.♗c5 ♖f5 22.♘xe6 ♘c4. Khalifman's recommendation 17.♕d2 looks somewhat questionable in view of 17...♗c6 18.♖fd1 ♕d7 19.♗c4 ♖d8.

Game 78
P.Svidler – A.Baburin
Bunratty 2009

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**d6xe5**
5.	**♘f3xe5**	**c7-c6**
6.	**♗f1-e2**	**g7-g6**



7. c2-c4 ...

White most often castles, but then transposes back to c2-c4. Solid play with c2-c3 is best combined with placing the bishop on c4 or d3.

7. ... ♘d5-c7

At this point, the 5...g6 and 5...c6 lines diverge. Compared with the b6 square (which is the knight's usual place in the Larsen-Kengis variation) the knight on c7 doesn't attack the c4 pawn. However, it controls the important e6 square and doesn't hamper the mobility of the queenside pawns. The game Koziak – Sergeev (Legnica 2007) continued 7...♘b6 8.♘c3 ♗g7 9.♗e3 ♗e6 10.b3 ♘8d7 11.♘f3 ♗g4 12.♘g5 ♗xe2 13.♕xe2 ♘c8 14.0-0 ♘d6 15.♖ad1 ♘f5 16.♘ce4 0-0 17.d5 where the knight has reached its best square, but by this time White has prepared to break through in the center and has the better position.

8. ♘b1-c3 ...

In response to 8.♗e3 ♗g7 9.♘d2 Black should play 9...c5!, highlighting the vulnerability of the d4 square. The complications after 10.♘gf3 cd 11.♕a4+?! b5! 12.cb de 13.b6+ ♘d7! 14.b7 ♗xb7 15.♖d1 (G.Garcia – Miles, Matanzas 1994) are better for Black after 15...♗d5 16.fe ♕c8 17.♘xd7 ♕xd7 18.♕xd7+ ♔xd7 19.e4 ♗xb2 – White has won back a piece but he remains a pawn down. Miles believed that 11.♗xd4 f6 12.♕a4+ b5 13.cb fe was better for Black, but we disagree. Apart from repeating moves after 14.♘xe5 0-0 15.♖d1 ♕d6 16.♗c3 ♕c5 17.♗d4 ♕d6 White can choose the promising continuation 14.♗xe5!? ♗xe5

15.♘xe5 ♕d5 16.b6+ ♘d7 17.bc ♕xe5 18.0-0! Instead of 11...f6 it's better for Black to castle with relatively quiet and equal play.

8. ... ♗f8-g7

9. ♗c1-e3 ...

Equality was also maintained in the game Yu Shaoteng versus M.Grunberg (Paks 2007): 9.f4 ♘d7 10.♘c3 ♘xe5!? 11.fe c5 12.dc ♕xd1 13.♖xd1 ♗xe5 14.♗e3 ♗d7 15.♖ac1 a5 (15...0-0-0!?) 16.b3 ♗c6 17.♘d5 e6 18.♗f3 ed 19.cd ♘xd5 20.♗xd5 0-0 21.♗xc6 bc. The position looks at first glance similar to the game being commented on, but in fact the exchange of queens leaves White without any initiative.

9. ... 0-0

10. f2-f4 ...

10.0-0 ♘d7 11.f4 is identical to the continuation in the game, while 11.♘f3 in analyzed via 6... ♘d7 7.♘f3 in the theoretical section. 11.♘xd7 ♕xd7 12.♕d2 ♗f5 13.♖ad1 ♖e8 14.♗h6 is also worth considering, planning d4-d5 whether or not Black agrees to exchange bishops.

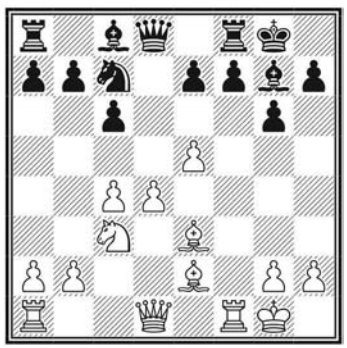
10. ... ♘b8-d7

11. 0-0 ♘d7xe5

Miroshnichenko versus Yu.Vovk (Cappelle-la-Grande 2009) first brought his knight to the center: 11...♘e6 12.♗g4 ♘xe5 13.de f6 14.ef ♗xf6 15.♕e1 ♘g7 (the computer's suggestion 15...♕d3!? 16.c5 ♘d4 17.♖d1 ♕c4 18.♗xc8 ♖axc8 is probably stronger) 16.♖d1 ♕c7 17.♗xc8 ♖axc8 18.b3 ♖cd8 19.♘e4 ♖xd1 20.♕xd1 ♘f5 21.♗f2 ♕xf4 22.♘xf6+ ♖xf6 23.♗xa7 ♕c7 with good play. That said, the knight can come under attack: 13.fe!? f5 14.ef and d4-d5 in response to any of the captures.

12. f4xe5 ...

The alternative doesn't bring any returns: 12.de ♕xd1 13.♖axd1 f6 14.ef ef 15.♗f3 ♖e8 16.♔f2 ♘a6 17.♘e4 f5 18.♘d6 ♖d8 19.b3 ♗f8 20.♘xc8 ♖dxc8 and a draw several moves later (Dolmatov – Tseshkovsky, Tomsk 2001).



Black has lost every game in which this position has appeared – largely due to the difference in strength between the opponents. In fact, White doesn't have much of an advantage, while Black can vary his plans.

12. ... c7-c5

After 12...♗e6 13.a4 f6 14.ef ef 15.♕b3 ♕e7?! 16.♗f2 ♘a6 17.d5 ♗f7 18.♗f3 f5 19.dc bc 20.♗xc6 ♖ab8 21.♗b5 Black has no compensation for the pawn (Bellaiche – J.Horvath, Paris 2003).

However, after 15...f5!? 16.♖ad1 ♕d7 17.d5 cd 18.cd ♗f7 the attack doesn't bring any particular benefits, while if White replies 16.♕xb7 ♗xd4 17.♗xd4 ♕xd4+ 18.♔h1 ♕b6 19.♕xb6 ab chances are absolutely equal.

13. d4xc5 ...

Weak resistance condemned Karttunen to destruction in his game with Karjakin (Kemer 2007): 13.d5 ♗xe5 14.♗xc5 ♘a6 15.♗d4 ♕c7 16.♗xe5 ♕xe5 17.♕d2 ♗d7 18.♖ae1 ♖ae8 19.♔h1 b6? (he should have sought salvation after 19...f5 20.g4!?) 20.♗g4 ♕c7 21.d6! ed 22.♘d5. Possible improvements include 14...♘e8 (closed to the king) 15.♗d4 ♕c7 16.♗xe5 ♕xe5 and 14...b6 15.♗d4 ♗d6 with the idea of e7-e5 and f7-f5.

13. ... ♗g7xe5
14. ♕d1-e1 ♗e5-d4?

Baburin is trying to establish his piece in the center (or else establish a pawn there if the piece is exchanged). However, Svidler executes a successful attack while avoiding the strengthened square, and therefore Black had to play 14... ♗e6 15.♖d1 ♕c8 and then ♖f8-d8.

15. ♗e2-f3 e7-e5
16. ♖a1-d1 a7-a5

This looks like he is handing the move to his opponent, but in fact Black is surrounded by trouble: White's next four moves may come in pairs (17.♗xd4 ed 18.♕e5 and also the manoeuvre ♘c3-b5-d6), as well as c5-c6.

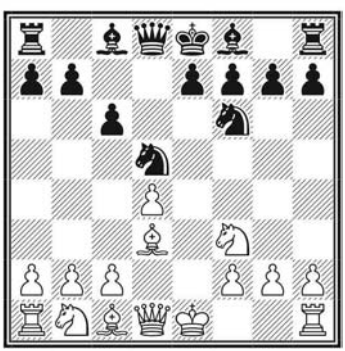
17. ♗e3xd4 e5xd4
18. ♕e1-e5 ♘c7-e6
19. ♘c3-b5 ♕d8-e7
20. ♘b5-d6 ♕e7-c7?!

After 20...♕xg5 21.♕xg5 ♘xg5 22.♖xd4 the 'support' has disappeared, and Baburin considered that his chances of hanging on were miniscule. His last move played here was in the style of 16...a7-a5 – lashing out in frustration.

21. ♗f3-d5 ♖a8-a6
22. ♔g1-h1 h7-h5
23. ♖f1-f6
1-0

Game 79
S.Karjakin – M.Carlsen
Nice 2008, rapid

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 d6xe5
5. ♘f3xe5 c7-c6
6. ♗f1-d3 ♘b8-d7
7. ♘e5-f3 ♘d7-f6



This move was barely given a mention in ♔halifman's monograph, as at the time of print there had been very few games played containing this move. Now, however, a large number of games have accumulated, including among elite players.

8. 0-0 ...

After 8.h3 ♗f5 9.0-0 e6 White should not underestimate the vulnerability of the pawn on c2. Black's bishop looks more lively than its white counterpart, so there are not many white players willing to spend a tempo on 8.h3. Godena versus Akopian (Legnica 2013) chose the move order 8.c4 ♘b6 (after 8...♘c7 and the development of the queen's bishop ♕d1-b3 is unpleasant) 9.h3 ♗f5 10.♘c3, then he exchanged the enemy bishop and broke through in the center, but only achieved equality – 10...e6 11.♗e3 ♗e7 12.0-0 0-0 13.♘h4 ♗g6 14.♘xg6 hg 15.♗f4 ♕d7 16.♕d3 ♖fd8 17.♖fd1 ♕e8 18.♕e3 ♘c8 19.d5 ed 20.cd ♘xd5 21.♘xd5 ♖xd5 22.♖xd5 cd 23.♗f3 ♕d7 24.♖c1 ♗d8! (nice defensive regrouping) 25.♕b3 ♘e7 26.♖d1 ♗b6 27.♗xd5 ♘xd5 28.♕xd5 ♕a4.

8. ... ♗c8-g4

Carlsen was unhappy with the outcome of the opening and in his blind game with Anand in the same Nice tournament five days later preferred 8...♗f5. That game continued 9.♘h4 ♗g6 10.c4 ♘b6 11.♘c3 e6 12.g3 ♗e7 13.♗e3 ♕c7 14.♘xg6 hg 15.♕b3 ♖d8 16.♖fd1 0-0 17.♖ac1 with the now familiar-looking demarcation line along the fifth rank. At the very least, if Black defends carefully he will avoid being smashed up.

9. h2-h3 ...

Or 9.♘e5!? ♗xe2 10.♕xe2 e6 11.c4 ♘e7 12.♖d1 with a spatial advantage but a somewhat different material balance. Nevertheless, after 12...♘g6 13.♘c3 ♕c7 14.g3 ♗e7 15.h4 0-0 16.♗g5 (Sasikiran – Rozentalis, Warsaw 2008) 16...♖fd8!? 17.h5 ♘xe5 18.de ♘e8 19.♗xe7 ♕xe7 20.♕e3!? (Sasikiran) White has not extracted any dividends.

9. ... ♗g4xf3

Those playing this position after Carlsen have consistently retreated the bishop to h5 and not without good reason. Later, the bishop will snuggle comfortably into g6, such as in the example 10.c4 ♘b6 11.b3 e6 12.♗e3 ♘bd7 13.♘c3 ♗b4 14.♕c2 ♗g6 15.♕b2 ♕a5 16.♘b1 ♗d6 17.♘h4 ♕c7 18.♕d2 ♘e4 19.♕c1 (Smeets – Schroll, Plovdiv 2012). The queen and bishop have sensibly headed home, whereas the knight has come to harass the enemy instead. Black's lack of space is compensated for by the activity of his pieces.

10. ♗e2xf3 e7-e6
11. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
12. b2-b3 ♗f8-e7
13. ♗c1-b2 0-0
14. ♘b1-d2 a7-a5

15. a2-a3 ♕d8-c7

The computers evaluate this position as almost perfectly equal. If that were the case then Magnus in his game with Vishy would hardly have been looking to extract anything better. In fact, White is happy to manoeuvre for 200 moves if needed, while any freedom bid by Black would just give White's bishops cause for delight.

16. ♕d1-e2 ♖f8-e8
17. g2-g3 ♖a8-d8
18. ♗f3-g2 ♘b8-d7
19. ♘d2-f3 ♕c7-b6

Everything seemed ready to execute c6-c5, but Black was worried about 19...c5 20.♖fd1 a4!? (this move would have been stronger against 20.♖ad1) 21.ba ♖a8 22.♕c2 ♘b6 23.dc ♘xa4 24.♗e5 ♕xc5 25.♖ab1.

20. ♕e2-c2 ♘d7-f8
21. ♘f3-e5 ♘f8-g6
22. ♘e5-d3 h7-h5
23. ♖a1-d1 ♕b6-c7
24. f2-f4 ♗e7-d6
25. ♘d3-e5 ...

The editorial board of Chess Informant criticized this move and suggested 25.♕f2, based on the assumption that after that move the knight would not be able to relocate to f5 from g6. Well, firstly, retreating with 25...♗f8 would still have allowed the knight's repositioning, and secondly, Black's position is very hard to break even without this manoeuvre.

25. ... ♘g6-e7
26. c4-c5 ♗d6xe5
27. f4xe5 ♘f6-d5
28. ♕c2-e2 ♘e7-f5
29. ♖d1-d3 h5-h4
30. g3xh4 b7-b6

Carlsen was not counting on materially pressurizing the other pawn with 30...♘de7 31.h5 ♖d7 32.♗e4 ♖ed8 33.♕d2 – the resources for exerting pressure are all used up, while dark clouds are gathering above the black king. Moreover, what could we say about the continuation 31.cb!? ♕xb6 32.♗e4 ♘de7 33.♕f2. It looks like the drawbacks of playing h5-h4 outweigh its advantages.

31. ♗g2-e4 b6xc5
32. d4xc5 ♕c7-e7

The Norwegian seeks counter-chances on the kingside, although the d-file would have been good for this, too, after 32...♘de7.

33. ♗e4xf5 e6xf5
34. ♖f1xf5 ♕e7xh4
35. ♗b2-c1 ♕h4-h7

White has retained his pawn majority, but absolutely all of his pawns are weak while the black king reigns supreme. Retreating the queen to e7 (with tempo) would have been slightly more accurate.

36. ♖d3-f3 ♘d5-c3
37. ♕e2-c4 ♖d8-d1+
38. ♔g1-h2 ♕h7-g6??

He probably just lost concentration in making what should have been the second move of the continuation 38... ♘d5 39.♖xf7 ♕g6 with the idea of

exchanging the queen for two rooks and a likely draw.

39. ♖g3-g5 ♕g6-c2+
40. ♖g5-g2
1-0

Our impression is that 6...♘d7 7.♘f3 g6 is more accurate than the immediate 6...g6. Black manages to break free without any significant damage to his position. The continuation 6...♘d7 7.♘f3 ♘7f6 (as played by Carlsen) has retained its reputation of being solid albeit passive.

Chapter 69. 6. ♗e2 ♗f5

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 d6xe5
5. ♘f3xe5 c7-c6
6. ♗f1-e2 ♗c8-f5



According to the stats, this move is encountered significantly more frequently than 6...♘d7. The bishop gets some space where it can do business and it is ready to withstand firmly whatever blows fate aims at it.

7. 0-0 ...

The first blow can be 7.g4!? Practice has shown that Black retains a solid position and can allow his king to be evacuated to the flank. For example, 7...♗e6 8.f4 f6 (8...g6 9.♖f1 f5 is a bit too provocative) 9.♘d3 ♗f7 10.0-0 ♘a6 11.♘c3 e6 12.♘xd5 ♕xd5 13.♗e3 ♗e7 14.♗f3 ♕d7 15.c3 ♖d8 (15...0-0-0!? 16.b4 ♘c7 17.a4 h5! is probably just as good) 16.♕e2 0-0 17.♔h1 ♘c7 18.♖ae1 ♗g6 19.♗f2 ♖fe8 20.♖g1 ♗d6 with good prospects (Navara – Short, Wijk aan Zee 2009). Or 8.♖g1 ♘d7 9.♘d3 ♕c7 10.♖g3 b5 11.♘d2 g6 (this would also have been fine two moves earlier) 12.♘e4 ♗g7 13.c3 0-0 14.♗d2 a5 15.♕c1 ♘5f6 16.♗f4 ♕a7 17.♘ec5 ♗c4 18.♘xd7 ♘xd7 19.♗h6 ♖fe8 20.♗xg7 ♔xg7 21.♖h3 ♘f8 22.♕h6+ ♔g8 23.f4 ♗xd3 24.♗xd3 e5!? 25.fe (Sanal – Bortnyk, Lvov 2013) 25...c5! 26.♗xb5 ♕b7! 27.a4 cd 28.cd ♖ec8 – having beaten back the threats along the h-file Black now starts to harass the enemy monarch.

7. ... ♘b8-d7

8. ♘e5-f3 ...

Another attack, 8.♗g4, is the subject of Game 80. But it's definitely the trend for the knight to avoid being exchanged. Grandmaster Shimanov skillfully countered the retreat 8.♘d3, controlling the important e4 square: 8...e6 9.♘d2 ♗e7 10.♘f3 0-0 11.c4 ♘5f6 12.♕b3 ♕c7 13.♖d1 ♗e4 14.♗f4 ♗d6 15.♗xd6 ♕xd6 16.♘de5 ♕c7 17.♕e3 ♗xf3 18.♘xf3 c5 19.♖d2 ♖fe8 20.♖ad1 e5 21.de ♘xe5 22.♕f4 ♘xf3+ 23.♕xf3 ♖e7 24.♗f1 ♖ae8 (Erenburg – Shimanov, Las Vegas 2013) or 9.c4 ♘5f6 10.♗f4 ♗e7 11.♘c3 0-0 12.♖e1 ♘e4 13.♗f3 ♘xc3 14.bc ♕a5 15.♕d2 ♘b6 16.♘b2 ♖fd8 17.a4 ♗f6 18.♕c1 ♖d7 19.c5 ♘d5 20.♗d2 ♕c7 21.♘c4 b6 22.cb ab (Andriasian – Shimanov, Yerevan 2014) with equality in both cases.

The blitz game Grischuk – Carlsen (Moscow 2007) saw 8.♘g4 being tested, followed by 8...e6 9.c4 ♘5f6 10.♘e3 ♗g6 11.♘c3 ♗d6 12.b3 ♕c7 13.h3 0-0 14.♗b2 ♖ad8 15.♕d2 (which actually allowed 15...♘c5! 16.♕e1 ♘ce4 or 16...♘d3) 15...♖fe8 16.♖fd1 ♗f4 17.♕e1 e5 18.d5 ♗xe3 19.fe ♘c5 20.♖ac1 ♕b6 21.♗f1 h6 22.♔h2 cd 23.♘xd5 ♘xd5 24.cd ♘e4 – and Black was fine.

Korotylev recommended 8.c4!? ♘b4 9.♘g4, having in mind Black's difficulties after 9...♘c2 10.♘e3 ♘xa1 11.♘xf5. But if we continue the line with 11...♕a5 12.d5 cd 13.cd g6 14.♘d4 ♗g7 15.♘c3 0-0 16.♗e3 ♕b4 17.a3 ♕xb2 18.♕xa1 ♕xa1 19.♖xa1 then we see that Black is still in the game. If, however, Black continues 9...e6 10.♘e3 ♗xb1 11.♖xb1 ♘xa2 12.♗d2 ♘b4 13.d5 ♗c5 14.de fe (Alekseenko – Bortnyk, Moscow 2011) 15.♗g4 ♘f8 16.♗c3 ♕xd1 17.♖fxd1 the fearsome bishops are more than sufficient compensation for the pawn.

8. ... e7-e6

The game Iordachescu – Loeffler (Plovdiv 2008) saw Black supporting the knight's invasion on f4 – a familiar ploy. But this was insufficient for equality: 8...♕c7 9.♘h4 ♗g6 10.c4 ♘f4 11.g3 ♘xe2+ 12.♕xe2 e6 13.♘c3 0-0-0 14.d5!? ♔b8 (after 14...♘f6 15.♘xg6 hg 16.♖d1 destroying the central pawn is risk as the c-file is opened) 15.de fe 16.♗g5 ♖e8, and with the most accurate continuation, 17.♘xg6 hg 18.♖ad1 ♗e7 19.♗xe7 ♖xe7 20.b4, there is no compensation for the broken pawn structure.

8...h6 is often played so that this important bishop doesn't get swapped. Black has an acceptable position, both after 9.c4 ♘b4 10.♘e1 e5 11.a3 ♘a6 12.♗e3 ed 13.♗xd4 ♘f6 14.♘f3 ♗e7 15.♕b3 ♕c7 16.♗e5 ♕b6 17.♕e2 0-0 18.b4 c5 19.b5 ♘b8 20.♘c3 ♘bd7 21.♗f4 ♗d6 22.♕d2 ♗xf4 23.♕xf4 ♗h7 (Sjugirov – Chuprikov, Voronezh 2009), and after 9.a3 e6 10.c4 ♘5f6 11.♗f4 ♗e7 12.♘c3 ♘b6 (defending from d4-d5)

13.♘e5 0-0 14.♕c1 ♘e4 15.♘xe4 ♗xe4 16.♕e3 ♗f5 17.♖ad1 ♗g5 18.♗xg5 ♕xg5 19.♕b3 ♗e4 20.g3 ♖ad8 (Shaposhnikov – Chuprikov, Voronezh 2010).

Now that we are on the subject of 8...h6 9.c4 ♘b4 we can't ignore the exchange sac 10.♘c3!? ♘c2 11.♖b1 ♘b4 12.♗e3!? ♗xb1 13.♕xb1. "Iron common sense" tells us to stay clear, but we also know that the bishop pair and spatial advantage to a certain extent justify the dowry. Top Alekhine devotee Mihai Grunberg has rarely been defeated in his favorite opening, as happened when faced with Australian David Smerdon (Paks 2007): 13...e6 14.a3 ♘a6 15.d5! e5 16.♖d1 c5 17.d6! g6 18.b4! f5 19.bc ♕c8? 20.♘h4 ♔f7 21.♘xg6! ♔xg6 22.♗h5+! ♔f6 23.♘d5+ ♔e6 24.♗g4. Black's difficulties started with 13...e6 – which created bait for the d4-d5 attack. In response to 13...g6 Andrew Greet recommends 14.♘h4!? with a dangerous initiative in many variations (for example, 14...g5 15.♘g6 ♖g8 16.♘xf8 ♘xf8 17.d5). Nevertheless, the computer likes Black's position after 14...♖g8 15.d5 a5 16.a3 ♘a6 17.♖d1 ♕c7 – White cannot open up the game to his advantage.

9. c2-c4 ...

Worried for the c2 square, White sometimes first plays the prophylactic move 9.a3. An instructive example here is Tukhaev – Miroshnichenko (Alushta 2009): 9...♗d6 10.♖e1 0-0 11.c4 ♘5f6 12.♘c3 ♖e8 13.h3 ♕c7 (13...e5!? 14.de ♘xe5) 14.♘h4 ♘e4! 15.♘xe4 ♗xe4 16.♗f1 ♗g6 17.♘xg6 hg 18.b3 e5! 19.de ♗xe5 20.♖a2 ♘c5 21.g3 a5, and, ignoring the enemy bishops, Black soon forced a truce from a position of strength.

9. ... ♘d5-b4

He also has an escape hatch – retreating to f6. Bacrot versus Degraeve (Belfort 2010) was somewhat less precise: 9...♘5f6 10.♗f4 ♘e4 11.♗d3 ♕f6 12.♕e2 ♘d6 13.♗g3 ♗xd3 14.♕xd3 ♘f5 15.♕b3 0-0-0 16.♖d1 ♘xg3 17.hg ♕f5 (17...g5 would have been even better) – Black has achieved everything he needed in going for exchanges. After 10.♘c3 ♗d6 11.♘h4 ♗g6 12.g3 0-0 13.♗e3 ♖e8 14.♗f3 ♕c7 15.♘xg6 hg 16.♖c1 ♖ad8 17.♕c2 ♕b8 18.♖fd1 e5?! 19.d5 cd (Papp – Janev, Plovdiv 2012) 20.♗xd5 ♘xd5 21.♘xd5 Black doesn't gain any additional prospects from breaking out of his somewhat cramped position.

10. a2-a3 ...

Another version of the exchange sacrifice is 10.♘c3 ♘c2 11.♗g5!? f6 12.♖c1 fg 13.♖xc2 ♗xc2 14.♕xc2 g4 15.♘d2 ♘f6 16.♕d3 ♗b4 17.♘de4 (Zelcic – Rozentalis, Dresden 2008). The Croatian Grandmaster obtained a couple of pawns and good play: 17...♗xc3 18.bc 0-0 19.♘g5 ♕d6 20.♗xg4 ♖ae8 21.♕h3 g6 22.f4 b6 23.♗xe6+ ♔g7 24.f5. If Black plays 17...

♕d7 and then castles long White's initiative is questionable.

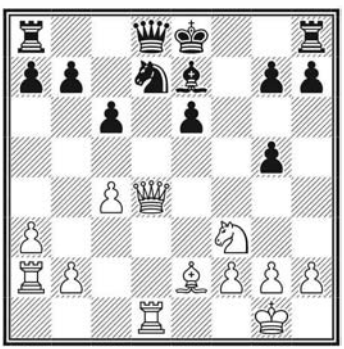
10. ... ♘b4-c2
11. ♖a1-a2 ♘c2xd4

If 11...c5?! then 12.dc! ♘f6 13.b4 ♕xd1 14.♗xd1 ♘xb4 15.ab ♗xb1 16.♗a4+ ♔e7 17.♖d2 or 12...♘xc5 13.b4 ♕xd1 14.♗xd1 ♘xb4 15.ab ♗xb1 16.♖d2! ♘d7 17.♗a4 0-0-0 18.♖fd1 with a winning position (Khalifman). Fighting to save the knight and then the light-squared bishop harms the mobility of the pieces.

12. ♕d1xd4 ♗f5xb1

In the game Carlsen – Madsen (Trondheim 2004) Black played an intermediate move before making the capture: 12...c5 13.♕c3 ♗xb1 14.♗g5 f6 15.♖xb1 fg 16.♕e3 ♗e7. Inexplicably, Magnus here ignored the pawns on e6 and g5, but he still easily outplayed his significantly weaker opponent. While three years later he played the 5...c6 system as Black.

13. ♗c1-g5 f7-f6
14. ♖f1xb1 f6xg5
15. ♖b1-d1 ♗f8-e7



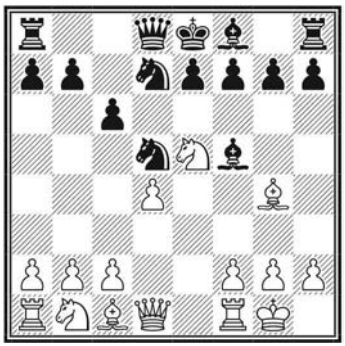
After 16.♕e4 ♕c7 17.♕xe6 ♘c5 18.♕h3 (Gharamian – Barthel, Boeblingen 2007) 18...a5 19.♗d3 ♕d6 20.♗c2 ♕h6 21.♕xh6 gh Black defended successfully. 16.b4 ♗f6 17.♕e3 ♕e7 18.♖ad2 isn't particularly dangerous either (van der Weide – Chetverik, Cappelle-la-Grande 2008) 18...♘b6 19.♘d4 ♗xd4 20.♖xd4 0-0 – he just needs to find the best way to return the extra pawn. However, the variation 16.♕xg7 ♗f6 17.♕h6 ♕e7 18.♘d2 0-0-0 19.♘e4 (Greet) is to White's advantage, despite his having one bad piece (the rook on a2) and one modest piece (the bishop). Therefore, we mark 9...♘b4 with the "?!" sign and instead look seriously at 9...♘5f6 as an alternative.

Game 80
A.Grischuk – G.Kamsky
Istanbul 2012

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 d6xe5
5. ♘f3xe5 c7-c6
6. ♗f1-e2 ♗c8-f5
7. 0-0 ♘b8-d7
8. ♗e2-g4 ...

Diagram

White offers to swap bishops, counting on activating his queen, which will exert pressure against his opponent's kingside. In the blitz



blitz game Wang Hao – Ivanchuk (Beijing 2011) Black agreed to mess up his pawn formation after 8... g6 9.♗xf5 gf 10.c4 ♘5f6 11.♕e2 ♘xe5 12.de, and 12...♕d4 13.♘a3 ♗g7 14.e6 fe 15.♕xe6 ♕f6 16.♕e2 0-0-0 would have left us optimistic about Black's position. 10.♘d3 or 10.♕e2 may have been stronger, waiting for the right moment to play c2-c4.

8. ... ♗f5xg4

9. ♕d1xg4 g7-g6

Kamsky could have continued 9...♘xe5 10.de e6 without facing danger. Black attacks the white pawns to counter the pressure on g7. After 11.♘d2 ♘b4 or 11.♖d1 ♕c7 White is best retreating his queen (to d1 or e2 respectively), and then Black will complete his kingside mobilization.

10. c2-c4 ...

A month later, in the rapid game Alekseev – Vitiugov (St. Petersburg 2012) White continued 10.♘f3 ♗g7 11.♕h3 ♘7f6 12.♗h6 0-0 13.♗xg7 ♔xg7 14.♘bd2 h6 15.♕g3 ♖c8 16.♘b3 a5 17.a4 b6 18.c3 e6 19.♘e5 ♘e7 20.♘c4 ♕d5 21.♘bd2 ♘f5 22.♕e5 ♖b8 – as is traditional in this variation, the exchange of the dark-squared bishops has kept just a minimal advantage for White. After this, Grischuk twice offers his opponent the chance to swap knights and is rebuffed each time.

10. ... ♘d5-c7

11. ♖f1-d1 ♗f8-g7

12. ♘b1-c3 ♕d8-c8

13. f2-f4 ...

Here, in response to 13.♘f3, Black should play 13...♘b6 with the plan to exchange queens. However, Black's reply to White's actual move really forces White to think.

13. ... c6-c5!

In line with the recommendation contained in the comment to 9...♗e6 in the theoretical part of Chapter 62 (advance the pawn to c5 in response to f2-f4). The exciting exchanges in the line 14.♕xd7+ ♕xd7 15.♘xd7 ♗xd4+ 16.♔h1 0-0-0! 17.♘xc5 ♗xc3 18.♗e3 ♗xb2 19.♘xb7 ♗xa1 20.♘xd8 ♖xd8 21.♖xa1 guarantee White a draw from a weak position. The continuation 14.♘f3?! cd 15.♘xd4 ♗xd4! 16.♖xd4 ♘e6 ends up costing a pawn, but 14.♕g3 cd 15.♖xd4 ♘xe5 16.fe ♘e6 17.♖e4 is relatively better.

14. ♘c3-e2 f7-f5

The game's online commentator, Alexey Korotylev, liked the line 14... ♘e6!? 15.♘xd5 (15.d5?! ♘xf4!) 15...♕xd7 16.d5 ♘d4 17.♕xd7+ ♔xd7 with the idea of b7-b5. Note

that Houdini's recommendation 15...♘xd4!? 16.♘xd4 ♗xd4 17.♖xd4 cd 18.♘e5 f6 19.♕xc8+ ♖xc8 20.♘f3 ♖xc4 21.b3 ♖c5 22.♘d4 ♔f7 can lead to any result – which is pointless for Black in the given situation.

15. ♕g4-g3 c5xd4
16. ♘e2xd4 ♘d7xe5
17. f4xe5 ♘c7-e6
18. ♘d4xe6 ...

We have to agree here with Korotylev when he says that the variation 18.♕b3!? ♘xd4 19.♖xd4 ♕c5 20.♗e3 ♕xe5 21.c5! leads to ample compensation for the pawn. Black should be happy with simplifications and equality after 19...0-0 20.♗f4 ♕c5 21.♕e3 ♕b6 22.b3 ♖ad8 23.♖ad1 ♖xd4 24.♖xd4 ♖d8 25.♖xd8+ ♕xd8.

18. ... ♕c8xe6
19. ♖d1-d5 b7-b5!
20. ♖d5xb5 ♕e6xc4
21. ♕g3-b3 ♕c4xb3
22. a2xb3 a7-a6
23. ♖b5-a5 ♖a8-d8
24. ♔g1-f2?! ...

The devastating attack with 24.♗f4 ♖d3 25.♖xa6 ♖xb3 26.♖a7 ♖xb2 27.♗g5 0-0 28.♗xe7 ♗xe5 29.♗xf8 ♗xd4+ 30.♔f1 ♗xa7 31.♖xa7 ♔xf8 32.♖xh7 (Korotylev) is easy to calculate when you are calm, but not when you are in time trouble in a key game at the chess Olympiad.

24. ... ♔e8-f7
25. ♗c1-g5 ♖h8-e8
26. ♖d1-e1 ♖d8-b8
27. ♖a1-a3 ...

Grischuk gives up the pawn, but he has retained good drawing chances. After 27.♖xa6 ♖xb3 28.♖a2 ♖eb8 29.♖e2 ♖8b6 30.♖a7 ♖b7 31.e6+ ♔f8 32.♖a8+ ♖b8 33.♖xb8+ ♖xb8 34.♗c1 White somehow retains a material balance and the chances of a draw are higher still.

27. ... ♖b8-b5
28. e5-e6+ ♔f7-g8
29. g2-g3 ♖b5-b6
30. ♖e1-e2 h7-h6
31. ♗g5-e3 ...

This manoeuvre of the bishop is much stronger than 31.♗f4 ♖c8 32.h4 ♖cc6 33.♗e3 ♖b5 34.♗f4 ♔h7 35.♔f3 ♗f6! 36.♔f2 g5 37.hg hg, when Black has a much better position as he wins the pawn.

31. ... ♖b6xe6
32. ♗e3-c5 ♖e6-c6
33. ♗c5xe7 ♔g8-f7
34. ♗e7-b4 ♖e8xe2+
35. ♔f2xe2 ♗g7xb2
36. ♖a3-a2 ♗b2-e5
37. ♗b4-d2 g6-g5
38. b3-b4 ♔f7-e6
39. ♔e2-d3 ♗e5-f6
40. ♗d2-e3 ♗f6-e7
41. ♖a2-b2 h7-h5
42. b4-b5 a6xb5
43. ♖b2xb5 g5-g4
44. ♗e3-f4? ...

White finally managed to exchange queenside pawns, and swapping knights here would guarantee a draw. After 44.♖b6 ♖xb6 45.♗xb6 ♗d6 46.♔e3 h4

47.♔f2 h3 48.♔g1 ♔d5 49.♔h1 all that remains is to prevent the bishop sacrifice for the two pawns.

44. ... ♗e7-f6
45. ♖b5-b7 ♖c6-a6
46. ♖b7-h7 ♖a6-a3+
47. ♔d3-e2 ...

Korotylev (and, most probably, Grischuk) didn't like 47.♔c4 due to the pretty combination 47...b4 48.♖h6 ♖c3 49.♔h4 ♖c6! 50.♗g5 ♔f7 51.♗xf6 hg! 52.hg ♖xf6.

47. ... ♖a3-a2+
48. ♔e2-f1 ♔e6-d5?

Now it's Gata's turn to lose his calm for a moment... He should have taken the second pawn, when locking in the rook won't help: 48... ♖xh2 49.♔g1 ♖h3 50.♖h6 ♔f7 51.♖h7+ ♔g6 52.♖b7 h4 53.♖b6 ♖xg3+! 54.♗xg3 hg.

49. ♖h7xh5 ♔d5-e4
50. h2-h3! g4xh3
51. ♖h5xh3 ♗f6-d4
52. ♖h3-h5 ♖a2-f2+
53. ♔f1-e1 ♖f2-g2
54. ♔e1-f1 ♔e4-f3
55. ♗f4-e3? ...

With his flag hanging Grischuk heads for a rook versus rook and bishop ending, with his king cut off and high chances of tripping on a mine. Whereas 55.♔e1 would have forced the American Grandmaster to accept a draw (55...♗f2+ 56.♔d1 ♗xg3 57.♗xg3 ♔g4! 58.♖xf5!, and the bishop successfully sees off the rook).

55. ... ♗d4xe3
56. ♖h5xf5+ ♔f3xg3
57. ♖f5-e5 ♖g2-f2+
58. ♔f1-e1 ♔g3-f4
59. ♖e5-e8 ♖f2-a2
60. ♔e1-d1 ♔f4-f3
61. ♖e8-e7? ...

He should have chased the king away with a head-on check (61. ♖f8+), or from the kingside (61. ♖h8 and ♖h8-h3), or else he should have played 61.♖b8 while keeping in mind the need to return to the first rank. Now, however, the second and third options are impossible, while the first won't save White.

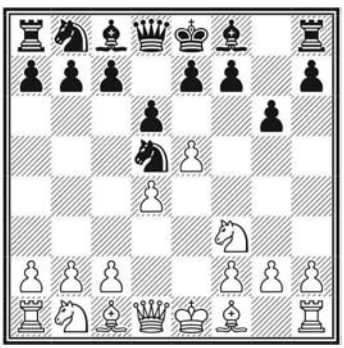
61. ... ♖a2-d2+!
62. ♔d1-e1 ♖d2-d8!
63. ♖e7-f7+ ♗e3-f4
64. ♖f7-f6 ♖d8-c8
0-1

It seems that only 6.♗e2 and c2-c4 are capable of ensuring an advantage for White. But if Black doesn't give in to risky temptations such as 9...♘b4?! from the theoretical line in this chapter, then White only has a territorial advantage. The Miles-Carlsen system should be classified as fully viable, and its relative popularity is hence justified.

Part 14 4.♘f3 g6

Introduction

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**g7-g6**

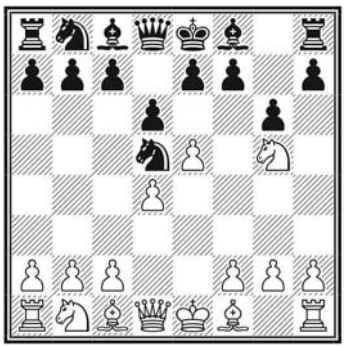


According to the Megabase, this was first played in the game A.Sergeev – Vilner (Leningrad 1925) without any hint of archaic style in the play of these opponents (5.♗c4 ♘b6 6.♗b3 ♗g7 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.ed cd 9.c3 0-0 10.♖e1 ♗g4 11.♘bd2 a5 12.h3 ♗f5 13.de de 14.♘c4 ♘xc4 15.♕xd8 ♖xd8 16.♗xc4 e4 17.♘h4 ♘e5 18.♘xf5 gf 16.♗f1 ♖fe8 with approximate equality). But until the end of the 1950s this natural fianchetto was not employed for some strange reason. When compared with 4... ♗g4 the theory of 4...g6 continued to take a backseat for many years, and even in the 21st century only half the number of games have been played in this line compared with the bishop move. It's important to bear in mind that White often plays 5.♗e2 or 5.c4 to transpose to the Exchange System. Given that the crafty Voronezh Variation cannot be played here Black should welcome this transposition.

In Chapter 70 we focus on the knight sortie 5.♘g5, while the subsequent chapters analyze White's alternative, 5.♗c4. Here the line splits into two: 5...c6 (Chapter 71) and 5...♘b6 (Chapters 72 to 76).

Chapter 70. 5. ♘g5

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**g7-g6**
5.	**♘f3-g5**	**...**



This move was first played in the game Wagner versus Rellstab (Swinemuende 1930). After that this variation started to be played (albeit, not that widely) by elite chess players. But in the 21st century, quite suddenly, it has almost entirely disappeared. This is easy to explain. The attack on f7 while simultaneously avoiding the pin with ♗c8-g4 is all great, but it means that White plays two consecutive moves with a developed piece, suggesting that a decent refutation is out there somewhere.

Caution! 5...h6? is definitely not a decent refutation, as the knight can be immediately sacrificed on f7. The first ever game in this line, Wagner – Rellstab, is very instructive here: 6.♘xf7! ♔xf7 7.♕f3+ ♘f6 (7... ♔e6? 8.♗d3 ♔d7 9.e6+!) 8.ef ef 9.♗c4+ ♔g7 10.0-0 (the black king is now a virtual castaway while the rest of the black army suffers from a lack of development) 10... c6 11.♘c3 d5 12.♗d3 ♗d6 13.♘e2 ♘d7 14.♗f4 ♘f8 15.♕g3 ♗xf4 16.♘xf4 f5 17.♖fe1 ♖g8 18.c4 dc? 19.♗xc4 ♖h8 20.♖e8! ♕g5 21.♕e3 h5 22.♕e5+, and the game is over.

On the other hand, chasing the knight with 5...f6 has no direct refutation. Bagirov argues against this move and demonstrates the fragment O'Kelly – Golombek (Amsterdam 1950): 6.c4 ♘b6 7.e6 fg 8.d5 ♗g7 9.a4 a5 10.h4! gh 11.♖xh4 ♗xe6 12.de ♘c6 13.♕g4 ♕c8 14.♖a3 ♘d4 15.♖e3 ♘c2+ 16.♔d1 ♘xe3+ 17.♗xe3 ♔d8 18.♗d4 – "White has a crushing advantage". However, if Black chooses the best continuation 18...♗f6 19.♗xf6 ef 20.♘c3 ♔e7 then he ends up the exchange and a pawn ahead with an impregnable position. So in fact White should continue 6.ef ef 7.♘f3 ♗g7 8.♗e2 0-0 9.0-0 c6 10.c4 ♘b6 11.♘c3 ♗e6 12.d5 ♗f7 (Penrose – Westerinen, Lugano 1968) 13.♗e3 ♗e6 14.♕d2 with a spatial advantage.

5. ... c7-c6

Black takes early action to strengthen the knight and prepares a comfortable square for its retreat.

It is also worth taking a look at the pawn exchange in the center, even though at first glance it doesn't look that solid for Black. 5...de 6.de h6?! 7.♘xf7! ♔xf7 8.c4 e6 9.♕f3+ ♔g7 10.cd ♗b4+ 11.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 12.♘xd2 ed 13.♖c1 with a powerful initiative for the pawn is no good for Black, but 6...♗g7 is actually fine. If White goes for a sharp continuation with 7.c4?! ♘b4 8.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 9.♘xf7+ ♔e8 10.♘xh8 ♘c2+ 11.♔d2 ♘xa1 12.♘xg6 hg 13.f4 (Rabovszky – Chetverik, Budapest 1993) then after 13...♗f5 14.♗d3 ♘c6 15.♗xf5 gf the trapped knight cannot be taken (16.b3?! ♖d8+ 17.♔c3 ♘xe5! 18.fe ♗xe5+ 19.♔b4 ♘c2+ 20.♔a5 ♖d6 21.c5 ♖a6+ 22.♔b5 ♖xa2). A critical position arises after 7.♗c4 c6 8.e6!? ♗xe6 9.♗xe6 fe 10.♘d2 ♘d7 11. 0-0. Bagirov believes that White is much better, but actually this is not so obvious after 11...b5 12.♗b3 ♘c5 13.♖e1 0-0 14.♘f3 ♕b6 – chances in this highly complex position are probably equal.

6. c2-c4 ...

6.♕f3 f6 7.ef ef 8.♕e2+ has also been tried, in order to prevent Black from castling after 8...♕e7 9.♘e4. However, even that objective is unattainable after 8...♗e7 9.♘e6 ♗xe6 10.♕xe6 ♕d7 – the bishop pair cannot do their stuff.

The variation 6.♗c4 de 7.de ♗g7 is identical to 5...de 6.de ♗g7 7.♗c4 c6. Black is also fine to avoid the exchange with 6...♗g7 7.ed ♕xd6 8.0-0 0-0 9.c3 ♗f5 10.♘d2 ♘d7 11.♘de4 ♘xe4 12.♘xe4 ♕c7 with equality and quiet play (Schroeter – Akopian, Berlin 1996).

6. ... ♘d5-c7

If 6...♘b6?! 7.♕f3 f6 White can pressurize Black with 8.e6! The amateurgame Shapiro – Schoenfisch (Germany 2006) continued 8...♕c7 9.♘f7 ♖g8 10.♕h3 f5 11.♕xh7 ♗g7 12.♕h8 ♗xe6 13.♘g5 ♗xc4?? 14.♗xc4 ♘xc4 15.♕xf8+! with a win. An acceptable continuation for Black is 13...♗g8 14.♘c3 ♘8d7 15.♗e3 e5, which demonstrates that the queen has got lost and that White should have instead played 10.♕e2 ♗g7 11.a4 d5 12.b3, maintaining the bind.

7. ♕d1-f3 ...

White continues his aggressive strategy that began with his fifth move. After 7.ed ♕xd6 8.♘c3 ♗g7 9.♗e3 0-0 10.♕d2 ♗f5 11.♗e2 (Watzka – Jansa, Vrnjacka Banja 1967) 11...♖d8 12.♖d1 Nba6 White only has a miniscule advantage in space.

7. ... f7-f6

8. e5xf6 e7xf6

9. ♕f3-e3+ ...

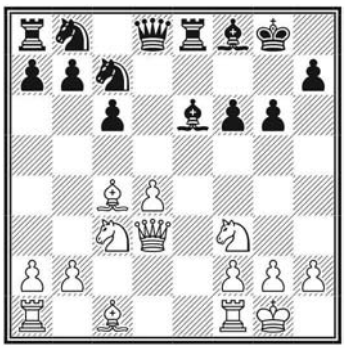
If 9.♘e4 then Black is advised to exchange the light-squared bishop and then move his pawns to light squares: 9...♗f5 10.♘g3 ♗xb1 11.♖xb1 d5 and f6-f5.

9. ... ♗f8-e7

Tal assessed the variation 9... ♕e7 10.♘e4 ♔f7 11.c5 as better for White. However, after 11...dc 12.dc

♘d5 13.♗c4 ♔g7 White should be pleased to draw by repetition (check from h6 and then retreating to e3).

10.	**♘g5-f3**	**0-0**
11.	**♗f1-d3**	**♖f8-e8**
12.	**0-0**	**d6-d5**
13.	**♘b1-c3**	**♗e7-f8**
14.	**♕e3-d2**	**d5xc4**
15.	**♗d3xc4+**	**♗c8-e6**
16.	**♕d2-d3**	**...**



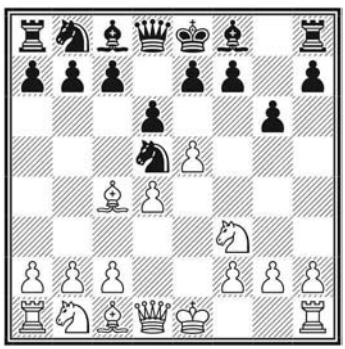
This position arose in the game Ljubojevic – Tal (Brussels 1988) and the ex-world champion considered it a critical one. He suggested that 16...♘d7 is sufficient for equality (which is true), whereas 16...♘ba6?! 17.a3 ♗xc4 18.♕xc4+ ♘d5 19.♗f4 ♕d7 20.♖ac1 ♖e6 21.♘xd5 cd 22.♕d3 ♖ae8 23.♖c2 ♗d6 24.♗xd6 ♕xd6 25.♖fc1 leads to palpable difficulties. However, after 17...♕d7 and ♖a8-d8 Black should still be fine.

We conclude that Black can easily equalize in this line. Moreover, if Black is determined to grab the initiative, then the line that Bagirov rejected, 5...de 6.de ♗g7, is more promising than the solid 5...c6.

Chapter 71. 5. ♗c4 c6

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**g7-g6**
5.	**♗f1-c4**	**...**

Diagram



After g7-g6 Black wants to avoid playing e7-e6, so the c4 square really comes calling for the bishop. The knight is now under attack and Black's range of options is

considerably narrowed. Capturing with 5...de is played only rarely. After 6.♘xe5 we reach the position analyzed in Chapters 62-64, which can also be reached, if Black so wishes, via the move order 4...de 5.♘xe5 g6. But 6.de is also promising, with the possible continuation 6...c6 7.♘c3 ♗e6 8.♘g5 ♗g7 (Khalifman demonstrates complications that are murderous for Black after 8... ♕a5 9.♗d2 ♘f4 10.♘xe6 ♕xe5+? 11.♘e2 ♘xg2+12.♔f1 fe 13.♗c3 ♕e4 14.♕d4 ♘e3+ 15.♕xe3 ♕xh1+ 16.♘g1) 9.f4 ♘d7 10.♗xd5 cd 11.♗e3 ♘b6 12.♘xe6 fe 13.♗d4 ♘c4 14.b3 ♘a3 15.0-0 ♖c8 16.♖f2 ♕a5 17.♕d3 b5 18.♖c1 b4 19.♘e2 ♘b5 20.c3 bc 21.a4 ♘xd4 22.♘xd4 (P.Cramling – Alburt, Reykjavik 1984). The Swedish Grandmaster locked the enemy bishop out of the game and eventually converted her positional advantage into a full point.

5. ... c7-c6

This move often transposes into the system with 4...de 5.♘xe5 c6, if Black subsequently captures on e5. The reciprocal attack with 5...♘b6 is the subject of Chapters 73-76.

6. 0-0 ...

Of the other moves, only 6.♘c3 is an independent line – White accepts doubled pawns in order to rid the diagonal of the bishop. Akopian versus Antonio (Las Vegas 1999) played by the textbook: he exchanged the light-squared bishop, moved all his pawns to light squares and blockaded the game, much to the annoyance of the enemy bishops. After 6...♘xc3 7.bc d5 8.♗d3 ♗g4 9.h3 ♗xf3 10.♕xf3 e6 11.♖b1 b5 12.0-0 ♘d7 13.a4 a6 14.♖e1 ♗g7 15.h4 0-0 chances are equal.

The continuation 6...♗g7 can merge into a variation of the Pirc Defense otherwise reached via 1.e4 d6 2.d4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.♗c4 d6 5.♘f3 ♘f6 6.e5, providing that Black plays 6...♘d5 instead of the usual 6...de 7.♘xe5 0-0. After 7.♗xd5 cd 8.♗f4 de 9.♗xe5 ♗xe5 10.de e6 11.♕d2 White has clearly the more pleasant position.

6. ... ♗f8-g7

It's too early to play 6...♗g4?! due to the vulnerability of the f7 square: 7.ed ♕xd6 8.h3 ♗xf3 9.♕xf3 ♗g7 10.♘c3! e6 11.♘e4 ♕c7 (Watson – Wohl, Kuala Lumpur 1992) 12.♗xd5!? cd 13.♘f6+ ♗xf6 14.♕xf6 ♖g8 15.♗g5 – and Black's dark squares are catastrophic. After 10...♘f6 11.♘e4! ♕xd4 12.♗xf7+! ♔xf7 13.♘g5+ Yermolinsky reluctantly returned the sacrificed piece to Lukin (USSR 1979) with 13...♔e8 14.♘e6, as 13...♔g8? 14.♖d1 ♕c4 15.b3 ♕xc2 16.♖d8+ ♗f8 17.♕e3 leads to Black's death.

7. e5xd6 ♕d8xd6

The moves that avoid the exchange are covered in the analysis of Game 81.

8. ♖f1-e1 ...

According to Bagirov, White

should prevent the exchange of the bishop by playing 8.h3 (Game 82). But this is not totally correct; in particular, White looks fine after 8.♘bd2 ♗g4 9.h3 ♗xf3 10.♘xf3. Play could continue 10...♘d7 11.♗b3 0-0 12.c4 ♘5f6 13.♗e3 ♖ad8 14.♖e1 ♖fe8 15.♘g5 c5!? (driven by Black's reluctance to be crammed into three ranks) 16.♗a4!? ♖f8 17.dc ♕c7 18.♕e2 ♘xc5 19.♗c2 h6 (Fedorchuk – Genocchio, Italy 2008), and then, apart from the natural retreat to f3, White can play the attractive sacrifice 20.♘xf7!? ♖xf7 21.♗xg6 ♖ff8 22.b4 ♘cd7 23.♖ad1. Nestorovic versus Vuckovic (Kragujevac 2013) immediately neutralized c2-c4: 10...b5 11.♗b3 0-0 12.♗g5 ♘d7 13.♗h4 e6 14.♗g3

Remember this pirouette, which allows the queen's bishop to occupy the important h2-b8 diagonal!

14...♕e7 15.♖e1 ♘7b6 16.c3 c5!? 17.♗xd5 ♘xd5 18.♕b3 ♖fd8 19.♕xb5 cd 20.♘xd4 ♗xd4 21.cd ♕b4! 22.♕e2 ♕xd4 23.♗e5 ♕h4 24.♕f3. The temporary sacrifice of the pawn is quite smart and a perfectly good move, but Black is still far from equality.

It's not difficult for Black to bring his light-squared bishop into the game. The normal White's advantage can be gradually neutralized: 8...0-0 9.♗b3 ♗f5 10.♘c4 ♕c7 11.♘ce5 ♘d7 12.♘xd7 ♕xd7 13.h3 a5 14.a4 ♗e4 or 9.♘e4 ♕c7 10.h3 ♘d7 11.♖e1 ♘7f6 12.♘xf6+ (12.♘g3!?) 12...ef 13.♗b3 b5 14.a4 b4 15.a5 ♗e6 16.♗d2 ♖ab8 17.♖a4 c5 18.♕e2 ♖fc8 19.dc ♕xc5 (Pribyl – Labuckas, Sweden 2002).

8. ... 0-0

The game Nunn – Vaganian (London 1985) continued 8...♗g4 9.♘bd2 0-0 10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♘xf3 e6 12.♗f1 b5 13.a4 b4 14.c4 ♘e7 15.a5 c5 16.dc ♕xc5 17.♗e3 ♕c7 18.♘d4 ♘bc6 19.♘b5 ♕b8 20.a6 ♘f5 21.♗c5 ♖d8 22.♕a4 ♗xb2 23.♖ab1 ♗f6 24.♗xb4 ♘xb4 25.♕xb4 ♗e7 26.c5 ♖d5 27.♖ec1 ♕f8. The pawn on c5 is doomed, but, despite what Vaganian wrote in Chess Informant, Black doesn't have any advantage, due to the activity of the white pieces. Ivanchuk versus Vaganian (Manila 1992) copied Nunn's play, probably counting on 15.c5!? ♕d5 16.♗f4 ♘f5 17.♗e5 ♗xe5 18.♖xe5 ♕d8 19.a5 (surrounding the b4 pawn). In his turn, the crafty Vaganian rejected his own unflattering assessment of the exchange 14...bc 15.bc as per Chess Informant and took to methodically outplaying the Ukrainian player after 15...♕c7 16.♗a3 ♖d8 17.c4 ♘e7 18.♖a2 a5 19.♖d2 ♘a6 20.g3 ♘b4 21.♗g2 ♖ab8.

Bagirov proposed meeting 8...♗g4 with 9.h3 ♗xf3 10.♕xf3 and added the mysterious variation "10...♕xd4? 11.♘c3!" in brackets. However, 11...♗xc3 12.bc ♘d7 is clearly fine for Black, so White should prefer 11.♕g4!? ♘b6

12.♖d1 e5 13.c3 ♘xc4 14.cd, forcing an uncomfortable ending after 14...♕e6 15.♕xe6 fe. The game Hellers – Baburin (Gausdal 1993) continued 10...e6 11.c3 ♘d7 12.♘d2 b5 13.♗b3 0-0 14.♘e4 ♕c7 15.♗g5 a5 16.a3 a4 17.♗a2 f5 18.♘d2 ♖ae8. The checkers-like setup of most of his fighting units failed to lead to equality, but the move f7-f5 appears questionable.

9. ♗c1-g5 ...

A rapid chess game between two top French players, Vachier-Lagrave and Bacrot, Nancy 2012, illustrates that careless attitude to one's king safety: 9.♘bd2 ♗f5 10.♘e4 ♕b4?! (why not exchange it?) 11.♗xd5 cd 12.c3 ♕b6 13.♘xf5 gf?! (13...ef would have isolated the d5 pawn, which would have been the lesser evil) 14.♘xf5 gf 15.♘e5 ♕d8 16.♕h5 ♘c6 17.♘xc6 bc 18.♖e3 ♕f6 19.♖g3 ♔h8 20.♗f4, and 1-0.

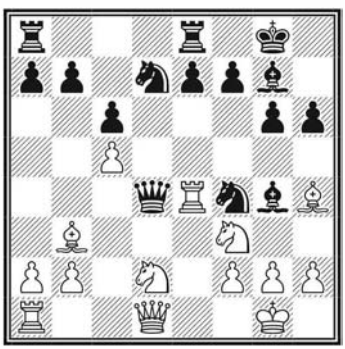
9. ... ♖f8-e8

We already know that the bishop's move to e6 is a signal to White to sacrifice the exchange in any event. At first it seemed that this sacrifice was refuted in the game Feuerstack – Kopylov (Lueneburg 2013): 9...♗e6 10.♗b3 b5 11.♘bd2 ♘d7 12.c4 bc 13.♘xc4 ♕c7 14.♖xe6!? fe 15.♕e2 e5 16.de ♘c5 17.♗c2 ♘e6 18.h4 ♖ad8. However, this assessment is changed by the nuance 15.♕e1! e5 16.♖c1! ed? 17.♘a5!, and White had a significant advantage in compensation for the material.

10. ♘b1-d2 ♗c8-g4

We should also take a look at 10...♗f5. In any event, the plan to free up c4 for the knight is a very serious one: 11.♗b3 ♘d7 12.♘c4 ♕c7 13.c3 ♘7b6 14.h3 ♘xc4 15.♗xc4 b5 16.♗b3 ♖ad8 17.♕e2 h6 18.♗h4 ♘f4 19.♕e3 ♘d3 20.♖e2 ♘f4 21.♖ee1 ♘d3 with a draw by move repetition (Renet – Rozentalis, France 2013). White can avoid the draw but he cannot gain any advantage – 21.♖d2 g5 22.♗g3 e5! 23.♘xe5 ♗xe5 24.de ♖xd2 25.♗xf4 gf 26.♕xd2 ♕xe5.

11. ♗c4-b3 h7-h6
12. ♗g5-h4 ♘b8-d7
13. c2-c4 ♘d5-f4
14. c4-c5!? ♕d6xd4
15. ♖e1-e4 ...



"With material gains" (Bagirov). Having succumbed to the magic of Tal, the defeated Ljubojevic (Wijk aan Zee 1973) ignored the commentary of his colleague Trifunovic in Chess Informant. After 15...♗xf3 16.gf ♘h3+ 17.♔g2 Black can even choose

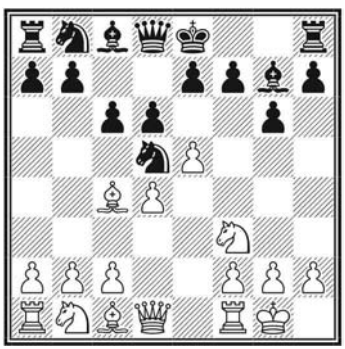
which pawn he wants to liquidate. In the variation 17...♕xb2 18.♖b1 ♕c3 19.♔xh3 ♕xc5 Black has three pawns for the piece and there are no material gains to boast of. Or after 17...♕xc5 18.♔xh3 ♘f6 (18...♕h5?!, which the Yugoslav actually played was considerably weaker) 19.♗xf6 ♗xf6 20.♕e2 ♗xb2 21.♖g1 Black can choose any defense to 22.♖xg6+ - 21...e6, 21...♗g7, or Trifunovic's suggestion 21...♕f5+.

Game 81

G.Kasparov – V.Ivanchuk

Las Palmas 1996

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**g7-g6**
5.	**♗f1-c4**	**c7-c6**
6.	**0-0**	**♗f8-g7**



7. h2-h3 ...

Here White needs to deal with the ♗c8-g4 pin. For example, 7.♖e1 ♗g4 8.h3 ♗xf3 9.♕xf3 de 10.de e6 11.♗xd5 (the bishop has got blunted and leaves the stage in order to open up the game) 11... cd 12.c4 ♘c6 13.cd ed 14.♘c3 0-0?! 15.♘xd5 ♘xe5 16.♕b3 ♘c6 17.♗f4 (Mamoori – Tabatadze, Iran 1997). White has grabbed the initiative, but after 14...d4 15.♘b5 0-0 16.♗f4 a6 17.♘d6 ♘xe5 18.♗xe5 ♗xe5 19.♘xb7 ♕f6 20.♕xf6 ♗xf6 his prospects aren't great.

Paragua versus Senador (Al Ain 2012) opened up the a2-g8 diagonal with a modification of the 6.♘c3 line. The game continued 7.♖e1 0-0 8.♘c3 ♘xc3 9.bc ♗g4 10.e6 d5 (10...f5!? 11.h3 ♗h5) 11.ef+ ♖xf7 12.♗e2 ♗xf3 13.♗xf3 ♘d7 14.♗g5 ♘f8 15.♗h4 ♗f6 16.♗g3 ♕a5 17.♕d3 ♖e8 18.c4 ♖c8 19.cd ed – and Black has a safe position.

In chasing the knight from the center White should not attempt to preserve the d4-e5 pawn chain at any price. The fragment Steinhart – Kopylov (Bad Wiessee 2005) is instructive in this respect: 7.♗b3 0-0 8.c4 ♘c7 9.♗f4? ♗g4 10.h3 (10.ed ed 11.♗g5 ♕d7 12.♘c3 ♗xf3 13.♕xf3 ♘e6 14.♗f6 ♘xd4) 10...♗xf3 11.♕xf3 ♘e6 12.♖d1 ♘xf4 13.♕xf4 de 14.de ♕c7, and there is nothing with which to defend the e-pawn. If White doesn't want to exchange on d6 then the prophylactic move 9.h3 will insure him from problems.

7. ... 0-0

8. e5xd6 ...

Adams versus Miles (Dublin 1993) continued 8.♗b3 de 9.de a5 10.c3 ♘a6 11.♗c2 ♕c7 12.♖e1 ♖d8 13.♕e2 ♘c5 14.♕c4 b6 15.♕h4 ♘e6 16.♘bd2 ♘df4 17.♘e4 ♘d3 18.♗xd3 ♖xd3 19.♗h6 ♖xf3 20.gf ♗xe5 21.♖ad1 with an advantage achieved thanks to the unconvincing ♘d5-f4-d3 manoeuvre and a questionable exchange sacrifice. After 15...♗a6 16.♗g5 h6 17.♘f3 ♗d3 18.♘a3 h5 it's not clear how White can extend his initiative on the kingside.

In the structure with the exchange on e5 it's sometimes useful to let go of the vulnerable e-pawn in order to make other gains. In the game Starostits – Thiel (Bad Woerishofen 2013) White broke up his opponent's pawn chain: 9...♗e6 10.♘d4!? ♗xe5 11.♘xe6 fe 12.♕e2 ♘d7 13.♘d2 ♕c7 14.♘f3 ♖f5 15.c4 ♘5b6 16.♗h6. White has an undoubted advantage and it's unclear how Black can strengthen his position.

The position after 8.♕e2 more often arises via a Pirc (1.e4 d6 2.d4 g6 3.♘f3 ♗g7 4.♗c4 ♘f6 5.♕e2 0-0 6.0-0 c6 7.e5 ♘d5 8.h3). Akopian versus Mammadov (Albena 2012) actively set his pieces up on the queenside: 8...de 9.de ♗e6 10.♗b3 (10.♘d4? ♘f4) 10...♘d7 11.c4 ♘b4 12.♗f4 ♘c5 13.♖d1 ♕a5 14.♘c3 ♖ad8 15.♘e4 ♘xe4 16.♗xe4 ♘d3!? 17.♗d2 ♕b6 18.♕e2 ♕c7 19.♗c3 ♘f4 20.♕e3 ♗h6. Thejkumar attacked Vaibhav's queenside (Mumbai 2013) with his pawns: 8...b5 9.♗b3 a5 10.a3 ♘c7 11.♘c3 ♗e6 12.♗xe6 ♘xe6 13.♘e4 de 14.de ♘d7 15.♘eg5 ♘xg5 16.♗xg5 ♘c5 17.c4 ♘e6 18.cb cb 19.♖fd1 ♕c7 20.♗d2 ♕b7 21.♕e1 a4 22.♗e3 ♖ac8. In both positions chances were equal.

8. ... e7xd6

We have now reached a structure which is not typical for 5...c6. Obviously, Black has to deal with the deformation of his pawns, counting on the solidity of his foundations and the modest charm of the bishop pair after 9.♗xd5 cd 10.♖e1 ♗e6 11.c3 ♘d7.

9. ♖f1-e1 ♘d5-c7
10. ♗c1-g5 ♗g7-f6
11. ♗g5-h6 ♖f8-e8

In the variation 11...♗g7 12.♗xg7 ♔xg7 13.d5 b5 14.♗f1 ♘xd5 15.♗xb5 ♕b6 16.♘a3 (Kasparov) White extends his territorial advantage, whereas here this is impossible as b2 is hanging.

12. ♖e1xe8+ ♘c7xe8
13. ♗c4-b3 d6-d5
14. c2-c4 d5xc4

After the position is blown open each player slams down his trump cards. Kasparov is betting on the better position of his army, while Ivanchuk pins his hopes on besieging the isolated pawn far out in the future. 14...♗e6 15.cd ♗xd5 16.♘c3 ♗xf3 17.♕xf3 is less precise, while 17...♕xd4?? is refuted by 18.♖e1 ♕e5 19.♖d8!

15. ♗b3xc4 ♘e8-d6
16. ♗c4-b3 ♘d6-f5
17. ♕d1-d2 ♘b8-d7

Black cannot take the pawn with his bishop – 17...♗xd4? 18.♗g5 ♕d6 19.♗f4 ♕d8 20.g4 wins a piece. On the other hand, after 17...♘xd4 18.♘xd4 ♕xd4 19.♕e1 ♕e5 20.♘a3 ♕xe1+ 21.♖xe1 ♗e6 Black returns the material with full equality.

18. ♘b1-c3 ♘f5xh6
19. ♕d2xh6 ♘d7-f8
20. ♖a1-d1 ♗c8-e6

Black has completed his development and it's high time for White to get rid of his isolated pawn, in order not to dance to Ivanchuk's tune.

21. d4-d5 c6xd5
22. ♘c3xd5 ♖a8-c8

Kasparov's variation 22...♗xb2 23.♕f4 ♖c8 24.♘e5(?!) ♔g7(?) 25.♘c4 ♗f6 26.♘d6 with a win relies on help from Black. On the other hand, the continuation 24...♗xe5 25.♕xe5 ♗xd5 26.♕xd5 ♕c7 is uninspiring for White, so instead of going for simplifications it would be better to attack the weak pawns with 24.♕b4 or 24.♕a4.

23. ♕h6-e3 b7-b6
24. ♘f3-e5 ♖c8-c5
25. ♘e5-g4 ♗e6xg4
26. h3xg4 ♔g8-g7
27. f2-f4 ...

Thanks to his centralized knight and the standoff along the central file White has some sort of initiative, but Black's position is very solid. For now Black cannot take on b2 in view of 28.♕f2! ♗a3 29.♕d4+ f6 30.g5.

27. ... h7-h6
28. f4-f5 g6-g5

If 28...♗xb2? 29.f6+! ♗xf6 30.♘xf6 ♕xf6 31.♖f1 (Kasparov) Black will get crushed along the f-file. But if Black first plays 28...gf 29.gf then at the end of the variation he can cover the file with ♖c5-f5. So it looks like the Ukrainian Grandmaster missed his best chance to maintain equality.

29. ♕e3-e2!? ♘f8-h7?

In time trouble Garry's opponent makes a 'mysterious' move. As a result of this blunder White's rook charges into f7. If 29...♖c8 the queen isn't strong enough to penetrate Black's Achilles heel: 30.♕a6 ♗xb2 31.♕xa7 ♘d7 32.♘f4!? ♖c1! 33.♖xc1 ♗xc1 34.♘e6+ fe 35.fe ♗e3+ 36.♔h1 ♗f4 and a draw with opposite-colored bishops.

30. ♘d5xf6 ♕d8xf6
31. ♖d1-d7 ♖c5-e5
32. ♖d7xf7+! ♕f6xf7
33. ♕e2xe5+ ♕f7-f6
34. ♕e5-c7+ ♔g7-h8
35. ♔g1-h1 a7-a5
36. ♗b3-e6

Black lost on time.

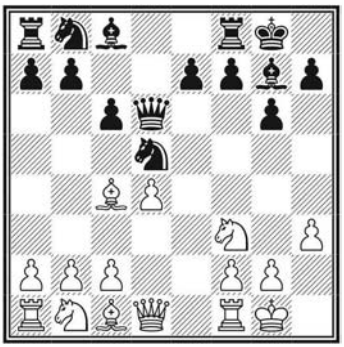
Game 82

S.Tiviakov – R.Vaganian

Moscow 2009

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6

4.	**♘g1-f3**	**g7-g6**
5.	**♗f1-c4**	**c7-c6**
6.	**e5xd6**	**♕d8xd6**
7.	**0-0**	**♗f8-g7**
8.	**h2-h3**	**0-0**



9. ♘b1-d2 ...

The queen on d6 acts as a magnet to White's knight for it to come and attack her majesty from c4 or e4. Svidler versus Akopian (Kallithea 2002) didn't wait for long to bring his knight into play: 9.♖e1 ♘d7 10.♗b3 b5 11.♘bd2 ♗b7 12.♘e4 (12.c4!? bc 13.♘xc4 ♕c7 14.♗g5 e6 15.♖c1 c5 16.♘ce5 ♖fc8 17.♕e2 was slightly more accurate, preventing his opponent from successfully breaking out) 12...♕c7 13.♗g5 e6 14.c4 bc 15.♗xc4 ♘5f6 (Svidler suggested 15...c5!? 16.♖c1 ♖ac8 17.♗b5 ♗c6 18.♗xc6 ♕xc6 19.♘xc5 ♗xc5 20.♖xc5 ♕a6 with compensation for the pawn thanks to the powerful knight) 16.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 17.♖c1 h6?! (chasing the bishop to the diagonal where it actually wants to be) 18.♗h4 ♖ad8 19.♗b3 ♕b6 20.♕c2 ♖de8? (20...♖fe8!?) 21.♗g3, and it's hard for Black to avoid losses. If 21...♕d8 then 22.♕c5! is a strong response, while 21...♖d8 is met with 22.♖xe6! fe 23.♗xe6+ ♔h7 24.♘h4. The game itself continued 21...♕b4 22.a3 ♕e7 23.♘e5 with the threats 24.♘xc6 and 24.♘xg6!

If 9.♗b3 then the advance c2-c4 will severely cramp Black as in the example Medvegy – Appel (Germany 2005): 9...♘d7 10.c4 ♘5f6 11.♘c3 b6 12.♖e1 ♗b7 13.♗g5 e6 14.♕d2 ♖fe8 15.♖ad1 a6 16.♘e5. Therefore, the prophylactic 9...b5 is the strongest reply for Black.

Caution! Advancing the b-pawn risks being hurt by a double attack that isn't that obvious: 9...b5 10.♖e1 ♘d7? 11.♗xd5 cd 12.♕e2 ♕c6? 13.♕xe7 ♕xc2 14.♘c3 (R.Jones – Baburin, England 2002). White was on the verge of winning, but Black's significantly stronger chess abilities saved the day. Black is advised to play 10...a5 11.♗xd5 cd 12.♕e2 ♘c6 with a reciprocal attack on d4.

9. ... ♘b8-d7

The game Krush – Pechenkin (Edmonton 2009) continued 9...♗f5 10.♗b3 a5 11.a4 h6 12.♘c4 ♕c7 13.♘ce5 ♘d7 14.♕e2 ♘xe5 15.de ♖fd8 16.♖e1 c5 17.♗d2 ♖ac8 18.♗c4 g5 19.♖ac1 e6 with equality. As usual, once the white pawn gets to e5 Black feels much better, so exchanging on d7 was clearly better.

10. ♗c4-b3 b7-b6

It would be interesting to know

whether Vaganian had seen the game Tiviakov – De Firmian (Gjovik 2009), which had been played just one month earlier?! After 10... ♘7f6 11.♘c4 ♕c7 12.♘ce5 ♗f5 13.c4 ♘b6 14.♗f4 ♕d8 15.♕e2 ♘fd7 16.♖ad1 ♘xe5 17.♘xe5 a5 (according to Tiviakov, 17... ♘d7 18.g4 is also better for White) 18.g4 ♗c8 19.♖fe1 a4 20.♗c2 the American had a decidedly worse position, so he avoided opening up the file for the rook: 20...♗e6!? 21.b3 ab. He probably took this decision as it's not easy for Black to keep control of the file without sufficient space to play.

As with 9.♗b3, another good response is 10...b5. For example 11.c4 (if 11.a4, then 11...b4, a7-a5 and ♗c8-a6) 11...bc 12.♘xc4 ♕c7 13.♗d2 c5 14.♖c1 cd 15.♘e3 ♘xe3 16.♖xc7 ♘xd1 17.♖xd1 with sufficient compensation for the pawn but nothing more (Bergez – Beudaert, Montpellier 2001).

11. ♘d2-e4 ...

Firat versus Spraggett (Barcelona 2013) switched his knight to e5 with tempo, ignoring the possible loss of a pawn – 11.♘c4 ♕c7 12.♘ce5 ♘xe5 13.♘xe5. The Canadian Grandmaster should have accepted the challenge and continued 13... ♗xe5 14.de ♕xe5 15.♖e1 ♕d6 16.c4 ♘b4 17.♕xd6 ed 18.♗h6 ♖d8 19.♗g5 ♖d7 20.♖e8+ ♔g7 21.♖ae1 ♗b7. Obviously, the extra pawn needs to be returned but Black should definitely not lose here.

11. ... ♕d6-c7
12. ♗c1-g5 ♘d7-f6
13. ♖f1-e1 ♗c8-a6?!

Tiviakov was right to consider f5 the best square for this bishop (but after the exchange of knights).

14. ♕d1-d2 ♖a8-d8
15. ♘e4xf6+ ...

If White plays 15.c4!? ♘xe4 16.♖xe4 ♘f6 17.♖h4 h5 18.♖e1 then his pieces look threatening, but his bishop is cut off and has nothing to do. However, this exchange may have been weaker. The black king is now out of danger, while the queenside pawn majority will not make itself felt before the endgame.

15. ... e7xf6
16. ♗g5-f4 ♘d5-e7
17. ♗f4-g3 ♕c7-b7
18. c2-c3 ♘e7-f5
19. ♗g3-f4 c6-c5
20. ♗b3-c2 ♘f5-d6

Obviously, not 20...cd? 21.♗xf5 dc 22.♕xc3 gf 23.♘d4. For the time being Vaganian has played this very impressively, and White's advantage gradually melts away.

21. d4xc5 ♘d6-c4
22. ♕d2-c1 b6xc5
23. b2-b3 ♘c4-d6
24. c3-c4 ♕b7-b6!

Now, 24...f5 is premature due to 25.♗h6, but after Black provokes White's rook invasion he gladly opens up the diagonal.

25. ♖e1-e7 f6-f5
26. ♗f4-h6 ♗g7-f6!
27. ♗h6xf8 ♖d8xf8
28. ♖e7-e1 ♗f6xa1

29. ♕c1xa1 ♗a6-b7
30. ♘f3-e5 ♕b6-c7?!

Tiviakov highlights 30... f6 31.♘d3 ♗e4 followed by exchanging the bishop. The board seems to be sporting something akin to a fortress, which cannot be captured either by battering ram or starvation.

31. f2-f3 ♖f8-d8
32. ♘e5-d3 a7-a5?!

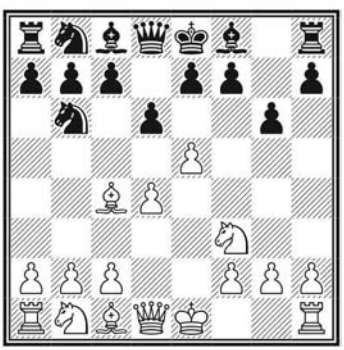
Vaganian meekly allows the enemy to invade his camp. It seems that he hadn't noticed that after 32...♕a5 33.♕f6 ♘e4!! the queen is forced to retreat. Therefore, the queen's transfer first needs to be prepared (33.♖e2!?).

33. ♕a1-f6 ♖d8-e8
34. ♖e1-e5 ♕c7-b8
35. ♖e5xe8+ ♘d6xe8
36. ♕f6-e7 ♘e8-g7
37. ♘d3-e5 ♕b8-e8
38. ♕e7xe8+ ♘g7xe8
39. ♘e5-d3
1-0

Nobody has refuted 5...c6 as a defense, but White's territorial advance once again leaves him better. The exchange e5xd6 is just as good for White as 4...de 5.♘xe5 carried out at Black's initiative. It is useful to study these lines in parallel, as the resulting positions have much in common.

Chapter 72.
Rare continuations after 5. ♗c4 ♘b6

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 g7-g6
5. ♗f1-c4 ♘d5-b6



The knight's retreat with tempo guarantees Black relatively easy development. But the drawback is obvious: this isn't a great square for the knight.

6. ♗c4-b3 ...

The manoeuvre 6.♗b5+ c6 7.♗e2 takes away the best square for the b8 knight, but due to the loss of time it fails to bring White any advantage. For example, 7... ♗g7 8.0-0 0-0 9.♘c3 ♗f5 10.♗f4 de 11.♗xe5 ♗h6 12.♗d3 ♗xd3 13.♕xd3 ♘8d7 14.♗g3 ♘f6 15.♖fe1 ♖e8 16.♘e4 ♘xe4 17.♖xe4 ♘d5 18.♖ae1 ♘f6 19.♖4e2 ♘h5

20.♕b3 ♘xg3 21.hg ♕c7 22.♘e5 e6 23.♕f3 ♗g7 24.c3 ♗xe5 25.♖xe5 ♖ad8, ½ - ½ (Faibisovich – Chetverik, Pardubice 2009).

6. ... ♘b8-c6

Sometimes this merges into the 6...♗g7 line (Chapters 73-76), but we will soon see significant differences. Action against the bishop in the form 6...a5 isn't particularly noteworthy after 7.a4 and isn't considered very safe due to the typical sacrifice 7.e6!?

Caution! After 7...f6?? 8.♘g5! Black cannot take the knight or he will get mated, so he loses his rook. This happened in three games recorded in the Megabase – one of which was a correspondence game! Black should never take his eye off f7!

Alburt in his game with Lukin (Beltsy 1977) failed to find a safe shelter for his king and ended up in a difficult position: 7...♗xe6 8.♗xe6 fe 9.♘g5 ♘c6 10.♘xe6 ♕d7 11.♕e2 ♘d8 12.♘xf8 ♖xf8 13.0-0 a4 14.♗e3 ♘d5 15.c4 ♘f4 16.♗xf4 ♖xf4 17.♕e3 ♖f7 18.d5 ♕g4 19.♘d2 ♕f4 20.♕e2 b6 21.♘e4. 13...♘c6 followed by castling long was probably the better strategy.

Game 83 analyses the continuation 6...d5.

7. e5xd6 ...

7.0-0 ♗g7 and 7.♕e2 ♗g7 are analyzed in Chapters 73 and 74, respectively. 7.e6 was played in Game 84. If 7.♘g5 then Black makes certain gains by waiting to play ♗f8-g7.

Caution! A headstrong attack on f7 may lead to a boomerang effect! After 7.♘g5 e6 8.♕f3 ♕e7 9.ed cd 10.c3?? ♗h6! White suddenly loses a piece. Frenchman Jean Pierre Alet trapped two unfortunate opponents three years apart in this line, while in the game Kosanski – Chetverik (Budapest 1993) the knight was naively chased away with 10...h6?

Given that 10.♗e3 ♗g7 11.c3 h6 12.♘e4 d5 13.♘c5(g3) e5! isn't that good for White either, we should analyze the fragment Hartvig – Bach (Esbjerg 2005). After 9.♘e4!? h6 (9...♘xd4? 10.♕c3! ♘xb3? 11.ed) 10.♗f4 ♗g7 11.ed ♘xd4! 12.♕g3 cd 13.♗xd6 ♘f5 14.♗xe7 ♘xg3 15.♗f6 ♗xf6 16.♘xf6+ ♔e7 17.hg ♔xf6 18.♘c3 ♗d7 Black has gained equal chances, but White could have played differently. For example, 13.♘xd6+ ♔f8 14.♘xc8 ♘xc8 15.c3 ♘xb3 16.ab (and the black king should head for h7) or 12.♕d3!? (instead of 12.♕g3) 12...♕d7 13.dc g5 14.♗d2 ♘xb3 15.♕xb3 with a very muddled position.

It makes sense to place the bishop on the a3-f8 diagonal in the case of 7.♘g5 d5!? 8.c3 f6 9.ef ef 10.♘f3 ♗d6, but the change of structure after 9.♘f3 de 10.♘xe5 (10.de?! ♗g4) 10...♘xe5 11.de ♗f5 is totally fine for Black. This knight sortie has practically disappeared from practice via the current move order.

7. ... c7xd6

Pesotsky, a chess master from

Kiev, defended the position after 7...ed 8.0-0 d5 on several occasions. He was unable though to hold on against the Grandmasters in the games of the European Championship. Salgado (in Rijeka 2010) gained dominance of the dark squares and a winning position after 9.a4 ♗e6?! 10.a5 ♘c4 11.♗xc4 dc 12.♘c3 ♘b4 13.♖e1+ ♗e7 14.♗h6 c6 15.♕d2 ♘h5 16.♘g5 ♗xg5 17.♗xg5 ♕c7 18.♘e4. Todorovic (in Budva 2009) came up with a clumsy redeployment of the bishop, yet also made significant gains: 9... a5 10.c3 ♗e6 11.♖e1 h6 12.♗c2 ♕d7 13.♗d3 ♗g7 14.♗b5 ♘c4?! (it's easier to defend after 14...0-0 15.♘bd2 ♗g7 16.♘b3) 15.♗f4 g5 16.♗g3 g4 17.♗xc4 gf 18.♕xf3 dc 19.d5 0-0-0 20.de fe 21.♘a3.

The structure after 7...♕xd6 is similar to that arising in Chapter 71 after 5...c6. The queen's knight seems to support the central attack with e7-e5, but given that this is extremely hard to execute it's better to have a pawn on c6. After 8.♘c3 ♗g7 9.♘e4 ♕d8 10.c3 0-0 11. 0-0 ♘d5 12.♗g5 h6 13.♗d2 ♗f5 14.♖e1 e6 15.h3 ♗xe4 16.♖xe4 ♘ce7 17.♖e1 ♕d6 18.♕c1 ♔h7 19.c4 ♘f6 20.♗f4 ♕d8 21.♕c2 c6 22.♖ad1 White has a standard territorial advantage (Szablowski – Chetverik, Prague 2010).

It is also interesting to look at Tiviakov's attempt (versus Neckar, Kusadasi 1990) to launch an all-out attack against the black fortress. After 8.c4!? ♕e6+ 9.♔f1!? ♘a5 10.d5 ♕d7? 11.♕d4 f6 12.♘c3 c6 13.♗e3 ♗g7? 14.♕c5! ♘xb3 15.ab the Grandmaster had gained a decisive advantage on the queenside, while the recommendation 13... cd 14.cd ♘xb3 15.ab ♕d8 doesn't materially improve Black's position due to the obvious regrouping ♔e1-e2, ♖h1-e1 and ♔e2-f1-g1. The correct continuation was 10... ♕d6! 11.♗e3 ♘bxc4! 12.♗d4 (after 12.♗xc4 ♘xc4 13.♕a4+ b5! 14.♕xb5+ ♔d8 the knight is untouchable) 12...♕a6!? 13.♗a4+ c6 14.♕e2 f6 15.♗xf6 ♘e3+ 16.fe ♕xe2+ 17.♔xe2 ef 18.dc ♘xc6, and the simplifications – under the mask of complications – lead to equality. Given that Black is fine to respond to 9.♗e3 with 9...♘xc4! 10.♕e2 ♘6a5 11.d5 ♕a6 12.♗a4+ b5 13.♗d4 ♖g8 14.♗c2 ♗g4 (followed by castling long), taking with 7...♕xd6 cannot be refuted by a headlong attack.

8. d4-d5 ...

This is beyond doubt the strongest move. If 8.a4 ♘a5 9.♗a2 d5 10.♕e2 ♘c6 11.♘c3 ♗g4?! 12.a5 ♘c4 (it's better to accept the line 12...♘xa5 13.♘xd5 ♘xd5 14.♕b5+ ♕d7 15.♕xd5 ♕xd5 16.♗xd5) 13.♘xd5! ♕a5+ 14.♘c3 ♗xf3 (Tseshkovsky – Opl, Velden 2009) 15.♕xf3 ♕b4 16.♗xc4 ♕xc4 17.♖a4 ♕e6 18.♗e3 and d4-d5, and Black has some difficulties, but 11...a6 prevents check by the queen and equalizes chances (12.a5

♘xa5 13.♗xd5 ♘xd5 14.♕e5 ♘f6 15.♖xa5 b5).

8. ... ♘c6-e5

After 8...♘a5 9.♕d4 Black comes to regret prevaricating over ♗f8-g7. The game could continue 9...f6 (9...♖g8 10.0-0 ♗g7 11.♕b4 ♘xb3 12.ab a6 at least this doesn't lock in the bishop) 10.♗d2 ♘xb3 11.ab ♗g7 12.♗a5 ♗f5 13.c4 0-0 14.0-0 ♕c8 15.♖e1 ♖e8 16.♘bd2 (16.♗xb6!? ab 17.♘c3) 16...♘d7 17.♗c3 a6 18.♘h4 ♘e5 19.f4 ♘f7 20.♘xf5 ♕xf5 21.♘f3, and Ponomariov methodically squeezed the breath out of Pesotsky in the endgame (Kiev 1997).

9. ♘f3xe5 d6xe5

It's not a good idea for Black to recast the chain, as it will be hard to get the pawns moving. The white infantrymen on the queenside run much faster.

10. 0-0 ...

In the game Kavalek – T.Ernst (Subotica 1987) White took action on the enemy territory: 10.♗e3 ♗g7 11.♕d2 0-0 12.♘c3 ♗f5 13.♗h6 ♖c8 14.♗xg7 ♔xg7 15.♕e2 f6 16.g4 ♗d7 17.h4 ♕c7 18.0-0-0 ♘c4. After exchanging the passive enemy bishop he missed out on securing the advantage.

10. ... ♗f8-g7

It's premature to send the knight to its best square: 10...♘d7 11.♘c3 ♗g7 12.d6! (Khalifman). The variation 12...♘f6 13.de ♕xe7 14.♗g5 ♗e6 15.♕e2 h6 16.♕b5+ ♕d7 17.♕xe5 is instructive: the bishop cannot be taken in view of 18.♗a4.

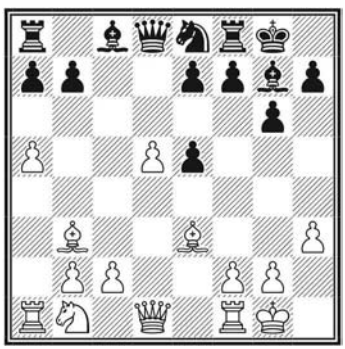
11. a2-a4 ...

According to Khalifman, there is no point in chasing the knight from a square which it is itself only glad to leave. Actually, 11.♗e3!? (with the approximate continuation 11... 0-0 12.c4 ♘d7 13.c5 ♘f6 14.♘c3 ♗f5 15.♕e2) is quite promising for White. Nevertheless, with accurate play the march of the a-pawn is also appropriate.

11. ... 0-0
12. a4-a5 ♘b6-d7
13. ♗c1-e3 ♘d7-f6
14. h2-h3 ...

The recommendation 14.♘c3 ♘e8 15.f4 is unconvincing in view of 15...♕c7 and ♘e8-d6. White needs to make preparations in advance of the knight's manoeuvre.

14. ... ♘f6-e8

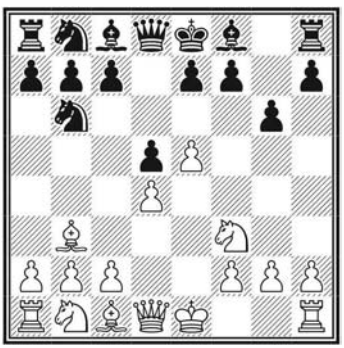


After 15. ♘d2 ♘d6 16. ♘c4 ♕c7 17. ♕e2 ♗d7 18. ♘xd6 ed 19. a6 b6 20. ♗a4 f5 (Mortensen – Hoelzl, Randers 1982) Black has fixed his pawn chain and is no

longer in danger. On the other hand, after 15. c4 ♘d6 16. c5 ♘f5 17. ♘c3 the white pawns hover over the enemy camp like the sword of Damocles.

Game 83
F.Corrales – J.Nogueiras
Havana 2010

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**g7-g6**
5.	**♗f1-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
6.	**♗c4-b3**	**d6-d5**



Black reduces tension in the center, giving up the pressure on e5. He is counting on his solid position without any vulnerable squares.

7. h2-h3 ...

This is useful prophylaxis, as it's easier to defend with the light-squared bishop exchanged. For example, 7.0-0 a5 8.a4 ♗g4 9.♘bd2 e6 10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♘xf3 c5 12.dc ♗xc5 13.♗h6 ♘c6 14.c3 ♗f8 15.♗f4 (exchanging bishops would have been slightly better) 15...h6 16.♕d2 g5 17.♗g3 ♗g7 18.♖fe1 ♘d7 (Palkovi – Z.Varga, Budapest 1996) – the weak e5 pawn is only compensated for by White's advantage in space.

7. ... a7-a5

In order to win back a bit of territory. Grigoriev's accurate play neutralized Shomoev's initiative (Izmir 2005) after 7...♗g7 8.0-0 0-0 9.♘c3 ♘a6 10.♗e3 c6 11.♕d2 ♘c6 12.♗xc4 dc 13.♗h6 ♘c7 14.♘e4 ♗e6 15.♖fe1 ♗d5 16.♕f4 f6 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 18.ef ef 19.♖e2 ♗xe4 20.♖xe4 ♘d5 21.♕d2 ♕d7. White would be advised to carry out a preventive march with his rook's pawn: 11.a4 ♗f5 12.a5 ♘c4 13.♗xc4 dc 14.♕e2 ♕d7 15.♖fc1 ♗e6 16.♘d2 c5 17.♘f3 with better prospects.

8. a2-a4 ...

Given that White is planning to place his bishop on the b1-h7 diagonal in any case, Rozentalis in his game with Krasenkow (Gausdal 2007) economized on a2-a4 – 9.c3 0-0 10.♗c2 ♘a6 11.♖e1 c6 12.♘bd2 ♘c7 13.♘f1 f6 14.ef ef 15.h4 ♗g4 16.♘1h2 ♕d7 17.♘xg4 ♕xg4 18.♖e7 ♖ac8 19.♕f1 ♖fe8 20.♘h2 ♕h4 21.g3 ♕h5 22.♗d1 ♕xh2+ 23.♔xh2 ♖xe7, and even the non-standard material balance was insufficient to shake the Grandmasters' desire for peace. The pawn advance h3-h4 is not completely logical given h2-h3, and

White should have preferred 15.♗f4 (or 15.b3, if White is afraid of the knight invading).

8. ... ♗f8-g7
9. 0-0 0-0
10. ♖f1-e1 ...

The rook frees up a square for the knight, whose road will take him from b1-d2-f1. But other paths are also possible. As an example please see Adams – Dunnington (England 1989): 10.♘c3 c6 11.♖e1 ♘a6 12.♘e2 ♘c7 13.c3 ♘c4 (13... ♘e6 14.♗c2 f5 15.ef ef 16.h4 f5 17.h5 ♕f6 18.hg hg 19.♘f4 with an advantage, Khalifman) 14.♗c2 b5 15.b3 ♘b6 16.♘f1 ba 17.ba ♘c4 18.♗b1 f6?

Caution! The thematic f7-f6 leaves e6 undefended, while in this case g6 is also weakened. White missed 19.♘xg6! hg 20.♗xg6 with the idea of 21.♘h4, and he would meet 20...fg with 21.♘g5.

10. ... ♘b8-a6
11. ♗c1-e3 ...

11.♗d2 forces the knight to return home, but this isn't fatal in a position with blocked pawn chains. Moreover, the bishop will have to move from d2: 11...♘b8 12.♘c3 c6 13.♕e2 ♘a6 14.♗e3 ♘c7 15.♕d2 ♘c4 16.♗xc4 dc 17.♗h6 ♗e6 18.♖e4 f6 19.♖ae1 ♗d5 20.♘xd5 cd 21.♖h4 ♗xh6 22.♕xh6 ♖f7 23.♘h2 ♖a6 24.♕e3 f5 (Smagin – Marinkovic, Cacak 1991). The early pressure has been beaten off, and with the knight getting to e6 it's not Black who faces difficulty.

11. ... f7-f6

Black earlier voluntarily rejected harassing the e5 pawn with his pawn when it was on d6, and now turns to his f-pawn for help with the accompanying inconveniences (see the warning above). After 11...♗f5 12.♘bd2 ♘b4 13.♘f1 c6 14.♘g3 e6 15.c3 the knight cannot establish itself on d3 and is forced to retreat to a6.

12. ♘b1-d2 c7-c6
13. c2-c3 ♘a6-c7
14. ♗b3-c2 ♗c8-e6

White doesn't consider it necessary to first exchange on f6, and so the experienced Grandmaster had the chance to play 14...f5 15.♘b3 f4 16.♗c1 ♘e6. But he decided not to take the risk.

15. b2-b3 ♘b6-d7
16. e5xf6 e7xf6
17. ♘d2-f1 ♗e6-f7
18. ♕d1-d2 ♖f8-e8
19. ♖e1-e2 ♘c7-e6
20. ♖a1-e1 ♗g7-f8
21. ♘f1-h2 ...

Corrales once again makes a messy move – he doesn't take action against the diversionary tactic 21... b5!? with 21.♗d3. But once again Nogueiras prefers to vegetate along three ranks.

21. ... ♕d8-c7
22. ♘h2-g4 ♗f8-d6
23. g2-g3 ♔g8-g7
24. ♔g1-g2 ♖e8-e7?!

He should have first moved his king to h8. Now, White has a nice tactic to support the attack.

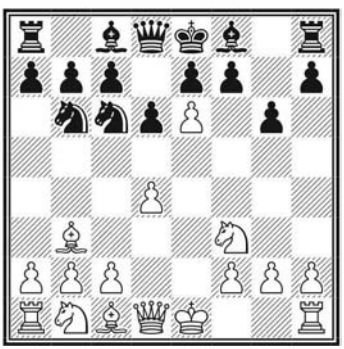
25. ♗e3-h6+! ♔g7-g8
26. ♗h6-g5! ♘e6xg5?

The bishop's manoeuvre has discouraged the Grandmaster to the extent that he raises the white flag without resistance (26...fg 27.♘h6+ ♔g7 28.♘xf7 ♖xf7 29.♖xe6 ♖af8 30.♖1e3).

27. ♖e2xe7 ♗d6xe7
28. ♖e1xe7 ♔g8-f8
29. ♘f3xg5 ♔f8xe7
30. ♕d2-e3+ ♔e7-f8
31. ♘g5xh7+ ♔f8-g8
32. ♕e3-h6 ♕c7-d6
33. ♗c2xg6 ♕d6-e6
1-0

Game 84
D.Kalashian – N.Dobrev
Moscow 2006

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 g7-g6
5. ♗f1-c4 ♘d5-b6
6. ♗c4-b3 ♘b8-c6
7. e5-e6!? ...



This pawn sacrifice has to be treated seriously, given that Black cannot take with his bishop or his pieces get forked.

7. ... f7xe6
8. h2-h4 ...

This is seen much less frequently than 8.♘g5. After 8...d5 9.♕f3 ♘xd4 10.♕f7+ ♔d7 11.♗e3 ♗h6 12.♗xd4 ♗xg5 13.♗xh8 ♕xh8 14.♘c3 ♗f6 15.0-0 c6 Heil won the exchange against Westerinen (Germany 1984), but the queen is placed awkwardly and Black has the better chances. A significant improvement is 11.♘xh7 e5 12.c3 ♘e6 13.a4, therefore, 8...♗g7 looks more reliable. Further, Varavin and Dyachkov (Elista 1996) continued 9.c3 d5 10.f4 ♗h6 11.h4 ♗xg5 12.hg e5!? (regrouping with 12...♔d7 13.♕e2 ♕g8, ♔d7-d8 and ♗c8-d7 is interesting) 13.de ♗f5 14.♗e3 ♘c4 15.♗xc4 dc 16.♕xd8+ ♖xd8 17.♘a3 ♖d3 18.♔f2 ♗e6 19.♘c2 0-0 with approximate equality.

Winning back the pawn after 9.♗xe6 ♖f8 10.d5 ♘d4 11.0-0 ♗xe6 12.de h6 13.c3 hg 14.cd ♕c8 15.♖e1 c5 16.dc ♕xc5 17.♗e3 ♕d5 18.♘c3 ♕xd1 19.♖axd1 ♖f5 failed to disturb equality in Frolov versus Pesotsky (Kiev 1997). However, the opportunity to play 13.♘h7! ♖h8 14.♗xh6! suggests that 12...h5 is stronger than 12...h6. Overall, after 8.♘g5 White has the better chances in a complex position, although he is short of the material needed for victory.

8. ... ♗f8-g7

8...e5!? was worth considering, in order to meet 9.h5 with 9...♗f5, while in reply to 9.de Black would gain comfortable play with 9...♗g4 10.ed ♕xd6 11.♕xd6 ed.

9. h4-h5 ♘c6-a5

Here 9...e5!? is also fine. In the approximate continuation 10.hg hg 11.♖xh8+ ♗xh8 12.♘h4 ♗f6 13.♘xg6 ♕d7 14.de ♘xe5 15.♕h5 ♕f5 16.♘f4+ ♕xh5 17.♘xh5 ♗h8 Black probably has the better chances. So it is becoming clear as to why 8.h4 has remained in the shadows of the sortie 8.♘g5.

10. h5xg6 ♘a5xb3
11. a2xb3 h7xg6
12. ♖h6xh8+ ♗g7xh8
13. ♕d1-d3 ♔e8-f7

The Bulgarian master had to make up his mind where to hide his king, but it's not clear that he made the correct choice. The less aesthetically pleasing 13...♗f6 14.♕xg6+ ♔d7 is actually safer.

14. ♘f3-g5+ ♔f7-g7
15. ♘b1-c3 ♘b6-d5
16. ♘c3-e2 c7-c6?!

After the strongest move 16... ♕g8!? 17.♗d2 (17.c4 ♘b4) 17... ♔f8 18.c4 ♘b6 19.♘f4 ♔e8 the king returns to the center, where he is protected by a mass of pawns, rather than by a fig leaf on g6. Dobrev didn't want to admit to his little error on move 13 and instead makes a serious inaccuracy.

17. c2-c4 ♘d5-c7
18. ♘e2-f4 ♕d8-e8
19. ♗c1-d2 e6-e5
20. d4xe5 ♗c8-f5
21. ♕d3-g3 ♕e8-g8?

If 21...de 22.♕h2!? ef 23.♗xf4 White wins back the piece with profits, but that was still better.

22. e5xd6 e7xd6
23. 0-0-0 ♔g7-f8
22. e5xd6 e7xd6
23. 0-0-0 ♔g7-f8
24. ♗d2-b4 ♘c7-e8
25. ♗b4xd6+! ♘e8xd6
26. ♘f4-e6+ ♔f8-e7
27. ♕g3xd6+ ♔e7-f6

White can choose from a number of ways to win 28.♕d4+ ♔e7 29.♕c5+ ♔f6 30.♖d7! mates more quickly than the line in the game itself. Kalashian decided that he would execute the king more easily (and more 'publicly'!), after marching him into the white camp.

28. ♘e6-d4+ ♔f6xg5
29. ♕d6-e7+ ♔g5-g4
30. f2-f3+ ♔g4-g3
31. ♕e7-g5+ ♔g3-f2
32. ♕g5-h4+ ♔f2-e3
33. ♘d4-c2+! ♗f5xc2
34. ♖d1-e1+

1-0

So far Black has no good news. Advancing with 6...d5 is too passive, while 6...♘c6 leaves Black in difficulty after 7.ed cd 8.d5. So it's getting obvious that Black should complete the fianchetto and we now take a look at the wide practical experience available, which is the subject of the following four chapters.

Chapter 73. 5.♗c4 ♘b6 6.♗b3 ♗g7 7.0-0

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**g7-g6**
5.	**♗f1-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
6.	**♗c4-b3**	**♗f8-g7**



Black is now ready to increase pressure on the d4-e5 pawn pair.

7. 0-0 ...

The continuation 7.♕e2 is the subject of Chapter 74, 7.♘g5 is considered in Chapter 75, and 7.a4 is analyzed in Chapter 76. The exchange with 7.ed cd nearly always transposes into another line.

7. ... 0-0

In the event of 7...♘c6 8.♘g5!? e6 9.f4 the pawn pair has been joined by reinforcements, and after 9...de 10.de ♕d4+ 11.♔h1 h6 12.♘f3 ♕xd1 13.♖xd1 a5 14.a4 ♗f8 15.♗e3 ♘d7 16.♘c3 (Rausis – Santo Roman, Cannes 1990) Black needs to take measures to counter ♘c3-b5.

8. e5xd6 ...

A switch to a structure from the exchange variation is recommended by Khalifman in his Alekhine Defense volume of Opening for White According to Anand. Below we provide a couple of fragments with different structures that don't merge into the main lines. Orlov offered Solozhenkin (St. Petersburg 1996) the chance to exchange on e5: 8.h3 ♘c6 9.♗f4 a5 10.a4 de 11.de (it's better here to swap off several pieces – 11.♗xe5 ♘xe5 12.♘xe5 ♗xe5 13.de) 11...♕xd1 12.♖xd1 ♗e6 13.♘c3 ♗xb3 14.cb e6 15.♘e4 ♘d5 16.♗g3 h6 17.♖ac1 ♘ce7 18.♗h2 ♖fd8 and Black's pieces are set up more harmoniously. Continuing 8.♖e1 ♗g4 9.e6 only serves to activate the enemy army: 9...d5 10.ef+ ♖xf7 11.♘bd2 ♗h6!? (11...♗xd4 12.h3 ♗xf3 13.♘xf3 ♗f6 14.c4 c6 15.♗e3 with the initiative for a pawn) 12.♘e4 ♗xf3 13.gf ♗xc1 14.♖xc1 de 15.fe ♕e8 16.♕g4 ♘c6 17.c3 ♔g7 18.♗xf7 ♕xf7 19.f4 e6 20.♖c2 ♖f8 21.♖f2 ♘e7 with equal chances in a difficult position (Yurtaev – Baburin, Oberwart 1991).

8. ... c7xd6

9. ♖f1-e1 ...

It's hard to imagine that White could have ignored moving his rook to the semi-open line, but he gave in to the temptation in the game

Plotkin – Gerzhoy (Ottawa 2013): 9.♗g5 ♘c6 10.c3 h6 11.♗e3 ♘a5 12.♗c2 ♘ac4 13.♗c1 e5 14.b3 (it makes sense to play the prophylactic 14.h3 here) 14...♘a5 15.d5 ♗g4 16.h3 ♗xf3 17.♕xf3 f5 18.♖d1 e4 19.♕e2 ♕c7 20.♗e3 ♘d7. Apart from his knight on a5 Black's pieces are ready for battle, while the light-squared pawn chain instills respect.

In the game Sanchez – Chetverik (Cannes 2010) the Philippinian GM chose a way to advance the c-pawn that was unusual in this variation: 9.c3 ♘c6 10.♗e3 ♘a5 11.♘bd2 ♘xb3 12.♕xb3 ♕c7 13.c4 ♗g4 14.♖ac1 ♖ac8 15.c5 dc 16.dc ♗e6 17.♕a3 ♘d5 18.♗d4 f6!? 19.♖fe1 ♗f7 20.b4 ♖fd8 21.g3 ♗h6 22.♖c2 ♕d7 – White's plans have been dashed. If he wanted to activate his pieces with the pair of black bishops still on the board then he should have played 13.d5 e6 14.c4 with slightly better chances. Kovchan versus Nevednichy (Iasi 2014) pushed forward in the center at an earlier stage: 10.d5 ♘a5 11.♖e1 ♘xb3 12.ab h6 13.♗e3 ♖e8 14.♘a3 a6 15.♗d4 ♗g4 16.♗xg7 ♗xf3 17.♕xf3 ♔xg7 18.♖ad1 ♘d7 19.♖d4 ♘f6 20.♘c4 b5 21.♘e3. White's advantage is peeling away, whereas the prophylactic 10.h3 would have stabilized it.

9. ... ♘b8-c6

10. c2-c3 ...

Aubert sacrificed his central pawn against Hauchard (France 1994) with the intention of exploiting the kingside holes that appeared: 10.♗g5 h6 11.♗h4(?!) g5 12.♗g3 g4 13.♘h4 ♘xd4 14.♘g6 ♖e8 15.♗h4 ♘f5 (in response to 15...♘c6 he probably planned the manoeuvre ♘g6-f4-h5) 16.♕xg4 ♘xh4 17.♕xh4 e6 18.♕xd8 ♖xd8 19.♘e7+ ♔h8 20.♘xc8 ♖axc8 21.c3 d5. White somehow regained the material but his endgame position is worse.

Practitioners focused of course on Anand's win against Timman (Linares 1992). After 10.h3 ♗f5 11.♘c3 ♖c8 12.♗g5 h6 13.♗e3 d5 14.♘e2 ♘a5 15.c3 ♘bc4 16.♗c1 ♕b6 17.♘f4 ♗e4?! 18.♘d2 ♘xb3 19.♘xc4 ♕a6 20.♕xb3 dc 21.♕d1 ♗c6 22.♖xe7 ♖fe8 23.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 24.♗e3 Black has nothing for the pawn. In response to Anand's suggestion 17...♕d6 the shuffling of the knights looks attractive 18.♘e2 ♗e4 19.♘h2 and ♘e2-g3. At the same time, Khalifman advised visiting the enemy camp one move earlier. In response to 14...♘c4!? 15.♗xc4 dc 16.♕d2 ♕a5 17.c3 ♔h7 18.b4 ♕d5 19.♘f4 ♕d6 20.d5, apart from 20...♘e5 21.♘h4 ♗d7 22.♗c5 ♖xc5 23.bc ♕xc5, it is worth considering Houdini's advice: 20...♘xb4!? 21.cb ♗xa1 22.♖xa1 g5 23.♘e2 b6.

10. ... ♗c8-g4

10...♗f5 is just as good, with the idea of exchanging its counterpart should it retreat to c2. In Khalifman's analysis 11.♗g5 h6 12.♗h4 ♕d7 13.♘bd2 ♖fe8 14.a4!?

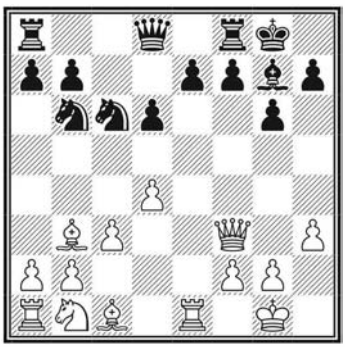
♘a5 (14...a5 15.♗xf7+!) 15.♗a2 ♖ac8 16.♗g3 ♘xa4 17.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 18.♖xa4, the light-squared bishop is useful on the b1-h7 diagonal. However, if we replace 16...♘xa4?! with 16...e6 then Black retains a solid position. The game N.Kosintseva – Pham (Ningbo 2009) continued 11...d5 12.♘bd2 ♕d7 13.♘f1 ♖fe8 14.♘g3 ♗e6 15.♕e2 ♘c4 16.♖ad1 b5 17.♗c1 ♗g4 18.h3 ♗xf3 19.♕xf3 a5 20.♘f1 e6 21.a3 ♘e7 22.♘h2 ♘f5 23.♘g4 f6 – Black has defended his kingside and gained activity on the queenside. The Russian player should have fought to gain an advantage with 17.h3, refusing to allow Black to swap the awkwardly parked bishop on e6.

The modest c2-c3 only encourages the e-pawn to advance. Ivanovic versus Rmus (Cetinje 2005) simplified the game without apparently gaining anything: 12.♘bd2 h6 13.♗e3 ♘a5 14.de (14.♕e2!?) 14...de 15.♗xb6 ab 16.♕e2 ♘xb3 17.ab ♖xa1 18.♖xa1 ♗e6. After 12.♘a3 a6 (the ♘a3-b5 sortie needs to be stopped) 13.de ♘xe5 14.♘xe5 de 15.♗e3 ♖e8 16.♗xb6 ♕xb6 17.♘c4 ♕c6 18.♕d6 Black needs to defend carefully in the endgame.

11. h2-h3 ...

The continuation 11.♘bd2 e5 12.h3 ♗f5 13.♘f1 ed 14.cd d5 15.♘g3 ♗e6 16.♗g5 ♕d7 17.♘e5 ♕d6 18.♗f4 ♕b4 19.♘xc6 bc 20.♗e5 ♗xe5 21.♖xe5 (Zhelnin - Oliwa, Katowice 1993) led to a position that was strategically better for White. Black's bishop has used up two moves in retreating in order to avoid being exchanged, which is illogical in the 10...♗g4 line. 15...♕d7 was the strongest move, followed by doubling rooks on the e-file.

11. ... ♗g4xf3
12. ♕d1xf3 ...



In the quick game G.Kuzmin – Solozhenkin (St. Petersburg 1997) Black created a pawn center but was unable to hold on to it – 12... d5 13.♗f4 f6 14.♗g3 e5 15.de fe 16.♕g4 ♔h8 17.♘a3 ♘d7? 18.♖ad1 ♘f6 19.♕e2 d4 20.♘c4 ♖e8 21.♗a4 ♘d7 22.♘d6 ♖f8 23.♗xc6 bc 24.cd and Black lost due to 24...ed 25.♕e6. He ruined his position by moving his knight to f6, instead of which 17...♕e7 18.♖ad1 ♖ad8 19.♕e2 ♖d7 was fine. Solozhenkin's plan deserves all the more attention as 12...e5 is insufficient for equality when White has a pair of active bishops – as

in Khalifman's variation 13.de de 14.a4!? ♘a5 15.♗a2 ♘xa3 16.b4 ♘c6 17.♗b3 ♘b6 18.b5 ♘e7 19.♕xb7.

Exchanging on d6 has proved to be a solid continuation. There is no longer any pressure on the e5 pawn, while the pressure on e7 makes it difficult for Black to organize counterplay. White's chances are somewhat higher.

Chapter 74. 5.♗c4 ♘b6 6.♗b3 ♗g7 7.♕e2

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**g7-g6**
5.	**♗f1-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
6.	**♗c4-b3**	**♗f8-g7**
7.	**♕d1-e2**	**...**



The queen strengthens the pawn on e5, although in doing so it reduces the protection of d4. Once the black knight is developed on c6 we need to consider various versions of the exchange with ♘c6-d4 (after d6xe5 and d4xe5). The struggle is mostly of a positional nature, but a very rich one with many subtleties.

7. ... ♘b8-c6

After 7...0-0 8.e6 f5 9.ef+ ♖xf7 10.♘e5 ♗xe5 11.de c5 12.c3 ♘c6 13.0-0 ♗f5 14.♖e1 c4 15.♗d1 e6 16.♘a3 ♘d7 17.f4 ♘c5 the knight invades the enemy camp (Ganguly – Gerzhoy, Edmonton 2008). The Indian Grandmaster has not however played very well: the e-pawn charge is dubious, the centralizing of the knight is premature, 11.de instead of capturing with the queen... Theory and practice going in opposite directions.

7...0-0 8.h3 a5!? was worth considering, and in reply to 9.a3 the standard exchange operation is even better: 9...a4 10.♗a2 de 11.de ♘c6 12.0-0 ♘d4 13.♘xd4 ♕xd4 14.e6 (14.♖e1 ♖a5!) 14...♗xe6 15.♗xe6 fe 16.♕xe6+ ♖f7 17.♘d2 ♖a5 with equality (Narciso Dublan – Chatalbashev, Benidorm 2007). In reply to 9.a4 the exchange of queens is fine: 9...de 10.de ♕xd1 11.♖xd1 ♘c6 12.♗f4 ♗e6 13.♘c3 ♗xb3 14.cb e6 15.♖d2 ♖fd8 16.♖ad1 ♖xd2 17.♖xd2 ♘b4 18.♗e3 ♘6d5

19.♗c5 (Kummerow – Chetverik, Oberhausen 2007) 19...♘a6!? 20.♘xd5 ed 21.♗e3 c6, and it's more pleasant to play Black here. In the event of 13.♗xe6 fe 14.♗h2 ♘c4 15.♘bd2 ♘6xe5 16.♘xe5 ♘xe5 17.♖e1 ♘c6 18.♘c4 White's initiative is sufficient to at best recapture the pawn.

If 9.a4, the queen's knight is ready to take an unfamiliar route: 9...de 10.de ♘a6!? 11.0-0 ♘c5 12.♖d1 ♕e8 13.♘c3 ♘xb3 (the a4 pawn is poisoned: 13...♗d7 14.♘d4 ♘bxa4? 15.♘xa4 ♘xa4 16.e6! or 15...♗xa4 16.♘xa4 ♘xa4 17.♘b5) 14.ab ♗e6 15.♘d4 ♗d5 16.♘xd5 ♘xd5 17.♘f5!? gf 18.♖xd5 ♕c6 19.♕d3 e6 20.♖d7 ♗xe5 21.♗h6 (Nunn – J.Howell, Isle of Man 1994) 21...♗d6!? 22.f4 ♔h8 23.♗xf8 ♖xf8 24.♕c3+ ♔g8 25.♕xc6 bc, and the position is drawish. After 17...c6!? 18.♘xg7 ♔xg7 19.♖d4 ♕d7 20.♖h4 ♔g8 21.♗h6 ♖fd8 22.♖e1 ♘c7 (Nunn) or 19.♗d2 ♕d7 20.b4 ab 21.♗xb4 ♖fd8 22.a5 ♕f5 23.♗d2 ♖d7 24.♖a4 ♖ad8 25.♖d4 ♔g8 26.b4 ♘c7 (Yaroshenko – Krecak, correspondence game 2005) Black has no problems. Which is also the case after 11.♗e3 ♘d5 12.0-0 ♘xe3 13.♕xe3 e6 14.♘c3 b6 15.♘d4 ♗b7 16.f4 ♕e7 17.♖ad1 ♖ad8 18.♖d2 ♖d7 19.♖fd1 ♖fd8 20.♗c4 ♘d4 (Fedorchuk – Pucher, Vlissingen 2014), although the Ukrainian Grandmaster soon exploited his opponent's blunders.

8. 0-0 ...

8.a4 (or the addition of a2-a4 and a7-a5 in various lines) is analyzed in Game 85. 8.c3 weakens the d3 square and undermines the pawn chain. After 8...de 9.♘xe5 (9.de ♗f5 10.e6 fe 11.♗xe6 ♗xe6 12.♕xe6 ♕d3) 9...♘xe5 10.de ♗f5 11.0-0 ♕d3 12.♕xd3 ♗xd3 13.♖e1 0-0 14.♘a3 a5 (14...c5!? 15.e6 f5 16.♗e3 ♖ac8) 15.♗e3 a4 16.♗c2 ♖fd8 17.♗xd3 ♖xd3 18.♗xb6 ab 19.♗e2 ♖a5 (Cao Sang – Chetverik, Budapest 1996) White needs to be careful, as can be seen from the variations 20.e6 f5 21.♘c4 ♖c5 22.♘xb6 a3! and 20.f4 e6 21.♘c4 ♖c5 22.♘xb6? (22.♘d6 ♗f8) 22...♖c6 23.♘xa4 b5.

8. ... 0-0

After 8...de 9.de ♘d4 10.♘xd4 ♕xd4 the position is the one favored by Santo Roman (from the commentary in Game 85) but without a2-a4 and a7-a5. The same issues are at stake: whether the e5 pawn is strong or weak (and, therefore, should White move it forwards straight away), whether the central queen is useful, and how to bring the b6 knight back into the game. If play continues 11.e6 ♗xe6 12.♗xe6 fe 13.♘d2 (13.♕xe6 ♕c4) 13...♕d5 14.♘e4 0-0 15.♘g5 e5 16.b3 ♕c6 17.c4 h6 18.♘e4 ♘c8 and ♘c8-d6 the knight is back in play and chances are equal.

After 11.♖e1 ♗g4 the very same Santo Roman demonstrated that exchanging queens was harmless

(in his game with Antonio, Manila 1992): 12.♕e4 ♕xe4 13.♖xe4 ♗f5 14.♖e1 a5 15.♘c3 a4 16.♗d5 0-0-0 17.♗e4 ♗xe4 18.♖xe4 f5 19.♖e2, and after 19...h6 and 20...e6 the bishop is activated via f8. In response to 12.♗e3 Bielczyk believes the variation 12...♗xe2 13.♗xd4 ♖d8!? 14.c3 ♗a6 15.♘a3 e6 16.♖ad1 ♗f8 to be the simplest way to equalize. After 12.♕f1!? 0-0 13.♘c3 ♕d7 14.♗g5 c5 15.a4 h6 16.♗h4 g5 17.♗g3 ♖ac8 18.f3 ♗f5 19.♖ad1 ♕c6 20.♘b5 ♕g6 Black has sufficient counterplay (Wei Yi – M.Bortnyk, Kocaeli 2013), hence White should resort to marching his rook pawn – 19.a5 c4 20.ab cb 21.ba bc 22.♕b5 ♕xb5 23.♘xb5 with the better chances.

9. h2-h3 ...

After 9.c3 de 10.de, unlike in the 8.c3 line Black cannot access the d3 square. That said, he still has a strong position: 10...♗g4 11.e6 f5 12.♖d1 ♕c8 13.♗f4 ♘a5 14.♗c2 (Petrov – Conquest, Ohrid 2001) 14...c6 15.♖e1 ♘ac4 16.♗b3 ♗xf3 17.gf ♘a5 18.♘d2 ♖d8. Black can also carry out the exchange in the center later: 9...♗g4 10.♗f4 a5 11.♘a3 (11.a4 is identical to the continuation 7.♕e2 ♘c6 8.a4 a5 9.0-0 0-0 10.c3 ♗g4 11.♗f4 from the commentary to Game 84) 11... a4 12.♗c2 de 13.de ♖a5 14.h3 ♗xf3 15.♕xf3 ♗xe5 16.♗e3 ♗g7 17.♖ad1 ♕c8 18.♖fe1 e6 19.♗xb6 cb 20.♘c4 (Shanava – Vallejo, Dresden 2007) 20...♘e5 21.♘xe5 ♗xe5 with equality.

9. ... ♘c6-a5

Exchanging the active bishop is the main continuation. Playing 9...de 10.de ♘d4 11.♘xd4 ♕xd4 12.♖e1 is fairly similar to Game 85 between Short and Timman (with the variations after ♖f1-e1) and merges with it after 12...a5 13.a4. The even pawn structure on the queenside obviously helps to shape the battle (in particular, it neutralizes the exchanges on b3 and b6), while it's not at all clear which player benefits from leaving the a-pawns on their initial squares. It's easier for the black queen to find refuge on the queenside, but the fragment Colovic – Pesotsky (Plovdiv 2008) serves as a warning: 12...e6 13.♘d2 ♗d7 14.♘f3 ♕c5 15.♗e3 ♕b5 (which is obviously impossible after a2-a4) 16.♕d2 ♗c6 17.♘d4 ♕a6 18.♘xc6 bc 19.c4 ♖fd8 20.♕c3 ♘d7 21.♗g5 ♖db8 22.♖ad1 ♘c5 23.♕f3 and White has a clear advantage. We highlight again that the ♗c8-d7-c6 manoeuvre isn't promising without first playing e7-e6.

10. ♘b1-c3 ...

Black has withdrawn his pressure on d4, so building a pawn chain with a2-b3-c4-e5 would be pointless. Control of d5 will subsequently become more important. In response to 10.♖d1 a good move would be 10...c6, followed by ♘a5xb3 and ♘b6-d5; and similarly: 10.♗g5 de 11.de c6, ♘d5xb3 and ♘b6-d5. Playing c2-c4 prevents the

knight from getting to the center, so instead it should head for c5 via d7.

If 10.♘bd2 then the c-pawn can act more confidently: 10... c5 11.dc dc 12.♕b5 ♘xb3 13.ab ♗f5 14.♕xc5 ♖c8 15.♕e3 ♗xc2 16.♖xa7 ♗d3 17.♖e1 ♗a6 18.♘e4 (Henriquez Villagra – O.Bortnyk, Durban 2014) 18...♖c6 19.♘d4 ♖c8 20.♘f3 ♖c6 with a draw by move repetition. Given that 15.♕b4!? ♖xc2 16.♘d4 ♘d5 17.♕xb7 ♖c7 18.♕b5 ♗xe5 19.♘xf5 gf 20.♘c4 ♗g7 21.♘e3 ♘xe3 22.♗xe3 is somewhat better for White, Black should have gone for 12...♕c7.

10. ... ♘a5xb3

10...d5 has also been played, restricting the mobility of the bishop on b3 and knight on c3. But then, White has a free hand on the kingside, as in the example Tiviakov – Aloma Vidal (Helsinger 2009): 11.♖e1 c6 (11...♗f5 is better, after which White should play 12.♘d1 and 13.♘e3) 12.♗f4 ♘bc4 13.♗xc4 ♘xc4 14.b3 ♘a5 15.♕d2 b6 16.♗h6 ♗f5 17.♖e2 ♖c8 18.♖ae1 ♕d7 19.♕f4 ♖c7 20.♕h4 ♖fc8 21.e6 fe 22.♗xg7 ♔xg7 23.♘g5 winning. The Spanish master had no counterplay whatsoever, which was pretty much the result of his own play.

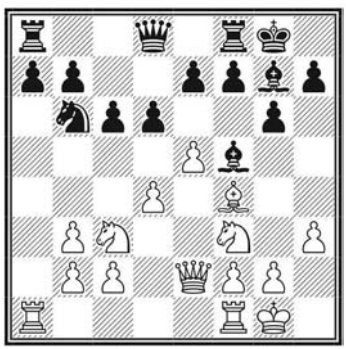
11. a2xb3 ♗c8-f5

After 11...de 12.de ♘d5 13.♖d1 ♘xc3 14.bc ♕e8 15.♕e4 the problem knight left the board, although the vulnerability of the queenside pawns prevents Black from completing his development. If 11...h6 12.♗f4 ♗e6, then 13.♖a5!, and the knight won't get to d5.

12. ♗c1-f4 ...

Anticipating c7-c6 the bishop aims at d6 in time. The exchanges left White with a small advantage in the game Gopal – Deepan (India 2006): 12.♖d1 a6 13.♘e4 ♗xe4 14.♕xe4 de 15.♘xe5 ♕d5 16.♕e1 ♘xe5 17.♖a5 ♗h2+ 18.♔xh2 ♕d6+ 19.♔g1 ♘d7 20.♕e4 b6 21.♖a1 ♘f6 22.♕f3. Adams attempted an improvement against Zhukova (Gibraltar 2010): 12.♘e4 ♕d7 (Zhukova demonstrates the variation 12...f6 13.♘g3 fe 14.de de 15.♘xf5! ♖xf5 16.♖d1 ♕f8 17.♕e4 c6 18.c4 with a clearly bad black knight) 13.♘g3 a6 14.♖e1 h6 15.♘e4 ♗xe4 16.♕xe4 de 18.de ♕d5 19.♕e2 ♕b5 20.♕e4 ♕d5 and a repetition of moves would have been logical (although the game was eventually drawn on the 52nd move).

12. ... c7-c6



It's funny to see the similarities

in the fragments Groszpeter – Leutwyler (Lenk 2000) and Berthelot – Vaganian (France 2005). The first game continued 13.♖fe1 a6 14.g4 ♗e6 15.ed ed 16.♘e4 ♗d5?! 17.♘xd6 ♕f6 18.♕e3 ♗xf3 19.♗e5! ♘d5 20.♗f6 ♘xe3 21.♖xe3 ♗xf6 22.♖xf3 ♗xd4 23.c3 ♗b6 24.♘xb7 with an extra pawn and victory to follow soon after. But in the second game the opponents 'missed' a move: 13.g4 ♗e6 14.ed ed 15.♘e4 ♗d5 16.♘xd6 ♕f6 17.♕e3 ♗xf3 18.♗e5! ♕e6 19.♕f3 ♗xe5 20.♘xb7 ♕xb2 and Black gradually equalized. The recipe for success is the same – replacing ♗e6-d5 with ♘b6-c8.

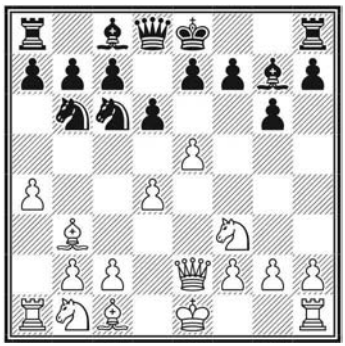
Game 85

N.Short – J.Timman

Tilburg 1991

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**g7-g6**
5.	**♗f1-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
6.	**♗c4-b3**	**♗f8-g7**
7.	**♕d1-e2**	**♘b8-c6**
8.	**a2-a4**	**...**

The pawn move is played rarely in this position, but it is often reached via a different move order. In particular, the actual move order in this game was 8.0-0 0-0 9.h3 a5 10.a4.



8. ... a7-a5

Caution! The infiltrator needs to be neutralized in good time! After 8...de 9.a5 ♘d5 10.de ♗g4 11.a6! ♗xf3 (11...ba 12.♕c4) 12.♕xf3 ♘d4 13.♕xd5 ♕xd5 14.♗xd5 ♘xc2+ 15.♔e2 ♘xa1 16.ab ♖b8 17.♗e3 the passed pawn (which was once just a modest rook's pawn) will force Black to return the exchange and look for ways to save the game. Moreover, 9...♘d7?! 10.♗xf7+! ♔xf7 11.♘g5+ ♔e8 12.♕c4 ♘f6 13.♕f7+ ♔d7 14.de ♘xe5 15.♕xg7 is even less attractive.

9. 0-0 0-0

9...de 10.de ♘d4 11.♘xd4 ♕xd4 has been willingly tested by Grandmaster Santo Roman. Play has continued 12.e6 ♗xe6 13.♗xe6 fe: the Frenchman forced a draw from a position of strength against Palac (Cannes 1997) after 14.♘d2 e5 15.c3 ♕d5 16.♘e4 0-0 17.♗g5 ♖f7 (17...♕c6!?) 18.f3 ♘c4 19.♖fe1 ♘d6 20.♕e2 ♗f6, while he easily maintained equality against van der Wiel (Cannes 1992) after 14.♕xe6

♕c4 15.♕xc4 ♘xc4 16.♖a2 ♖f8 17.b3 ♘d6 18.♗a3 ♖f5 19.c4 ♗f6 20.♖e2 ♖e5 21.♖xe5 ♗xe5 22.♘d2 ♖d8 23.♘f3 ♗f6.

A somewhat better ending for White was forced after 12.♖e1 ♗g4 13.♗e3 ♗xe2 14.♗xd4 ♗xc4 15.♗xb6 ♗xb3 16.cb cb 17.♘a3 0-0 18.♘c4 (Palac – Santo Roman, Cannes 2000). The little analyzed 13.♕f1!? (13...♗xe5?! 14.♕b5+ ♘d7 15.♘d2! threatening 16.♖e4) is an attempt to gain an advantage in a more complicated position.

10. h2-h3 ...

After 10.c3 ♗g4 11.♗f4 ♕d7 12.♘bd2 ♕f5 13.♕e3 (13.♗g3 ♗h6 14.h3 ♗h5 16.♕e1 ♕d3 16.♕b1 ♕xb1 17.♖axb1 is harmless) 13... de 14.♘xe5 ♘xe5 15.♗xe5 (15. de ♕d7 16.♕e4 c6 17.♖fe1 ♗e6 18.♗xe6 ♕xe6) 15...♗xe5 16.de ♖ad8 17.f3 ♕d3! 18.♕xd3 ♖xd3 19.♘e4 ♗f5 20.♘c5 ♖d2 21.♖f2 ♖fd8 22.♘xb7 ♖xf2 23.♔xf2 ♖d2+ 24.♔g3 ♖xb2 25.♘xa5 (Landa – Chetverik, Gyongyos 1997) White's extra pawn counts for nothing due to the activity of the black pieces. 17.e6! ♘d5 18.ef+ ♕xf7 19.♕e5 is a significant improvement.

It's probably better for Black to play 11...de 12.de ♗xf3 13.♕xf3 ♗xe5!? 14.♗xe5 ♘xe5 15.♕xb7 c6 16.♖d1 ♘bd7 17.♗c2 (17.♖a3 ♘c5 18.♖xd8 ♘xb7 19.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 is preferable) 17...♖b8 18.♕e7 ♖xb2 19.♘a3 ♕b6! 20.♖xd7 ♘xd7 21.♕xd7 ♕c5 22.♕d3 ♖fb8 23.h3 ♖8b3! 24.♘b1 ♔g7 25.♕d2 ♖b8 (Zhang Zhong – Vescovi, Taiyuan 2006). This long-drawn GM battle was full of adventures, but the first act was dictated by Black.

10. ... d6xe5

Challenging the center with d6-d5 (now or a little later) blunts the game and leaves Black having to defend despondently. For example, 10...♗f5 11.♘c3 d5 12.♗f4 ♖c8 13.♘d1 ♗e4 14.c3 ♗xf3 15.♕xf3 e6 16.♘c3 f6 17.♕g4 f5 (17...fe 18.♗xe5 ♘xe5 19.de ♕e8 and c7-c5 is slightly better) 18.♕g3 ♕e8 19.♕h4 ♘d8 20.♗g5 ♖f7 21.♖fe1 ♖d7 22.g4 ♕f8 23.gf ef 24.e6! ♘xe6 25.♘xd5 ♘xd5 26.♖xe6 ♖e8 27.♖ae1 ♖xe6 28.♖xe6 with the initiative (Acs – Chetverik, Budapest 1994). If Black retains tension in the center then White can also drive forward: 11...♘b4 12.♗g5 ♕d7 13.♖ad1 c6 14.♖fe1 ♖ae8 15.♘e4 ♗e6 16.♗xe6 ♕xe6 17.c3 ♘4d5 18.c4 ♘b4 (Bellin – Solozhenkin, Montecatini Terme 1997) 19.b3 f5 20.♘g3.

11. d4xe5 ♘c6-d4
12. ♘f3xd4 ♕d8xd4
13. ♖f1-e1 e7-e6

As well as the main continuation, 13...♗e6 blocks the e5 pawn. Otherwise, it is ready to charge forwards. After 13...♘d7?! 14.e6 fe 15.♗xe6+ ♔h8 16.♘c3 ♘e5 17.♘b5 (Tregubov – McShane, Germany 2006) 17...♕b6 18.♗xc8 ♖axc8 19.♗e3 c5 20.♖ad1 White has a huge advantage in his piece setup.

After 13...♗d7!? 14.♘c3 ♗c6 15.e6 f5 16.♗g5 White counts on the strength of his 'nail', but here it's not too late to block it: 14...e6! 15.♗g5 ♕c5 16.♕g4 ♗c6 17.♘e4 ♗xe4 18.♕xe4 ♘d7 19.♗f4 (19.♕xb7 ♖ab8 20.♕e4 ♘xe5 isn't any better) 19...♕b4 20.♕xb4 ab 21.♖e4 c5 with chances to draw (Eismont – Chetverik, Briansk 1995). Transferring the bishop to c6 via d7 is worth playing against strong players. The little-known Chilean player Egger earned a nice clean draw against Stefansson (Moscow 1994) after 14.c3 ♕h4 15.♘d2 ♗c6 16.♘e4 ♗xe5 17.♗g5 ♕xe4 18.♕xe4 ♗xe4 19.♖xe4 ♘d7 20.♖d1 ♗d6 21.♗xe7 ♘c5 22.♗xf8 ♔xf8.

Let's return to 13...♗e6. Earlier, we defended the reputation of the doubled pawns, successfully controlling the central squares. After 14.♗xe6 fe 15.♘d2 being greedy is ill-advised: 15...♘xa4?! 16.♘f3 ♕d7 17.♖d1 ♕e8 18,♕c4 b5 19.♕xe6+ ♔h8 20.b3 ♘c5 21.♕d5 ♖d8 22.♕xd8 ♕xd8 23.♖xd8 ♖xd8 24.♗g5 (Aranovitch – Sax, Bratto 2009) and Black faces a tough defense in the endgame, while after 20.♗g5! ♘xb2 21.♖d7 a hard life awaits him in the middlegame. After 15...♖f5 Black usually faces a difficult endgame, such as in the example Galyas – Chetverik (Harkany 1999): 16.♘f3 ♕c4 17.b3 ♕xe2 18.♖xe2 ♘d5 19.♗d2 ♖d8 20.♗xa5 ♘f4 21.♖d2 ♖xd2 (21...♖a8 22.♗xc7 ♘d5 23.♘d4 ♘xc7 24.♘xf5 ef 25.f4) 22.♗xd2 ♘xh3+ 23.♔f1. Here, Black had a good practical chance – 23...♗xe5!? 24.♘xe5 ♖xf2+ 25.♔e1 ♖xg2 26.♖d1 ♔g7, where converting the extra piece into a win is problematic.

14. ♘b1-d2 ♘b6-d5

Timman centralizes his knight, whereas his predecessors and successors transferred the bishop from c8 to c6 via d7. This is a somewhat inferior way of playing 13...♗d7 (with the knight on d2 there is no need for e7-e6), but Black's position is defensible. After 14...♗d7 15.♘f3 ♕b4 16.♗d2 ♕c5 17.♗e3 ♕b4 18.♖ed1 ♗c6 19.♘d4 ♖fd8 20.c3 ♕e7 21.f4 ♘d5 22.♗xd5 ♗xd5 23.c4 ♗c6 24.♘xc6 bc 25.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 26.♖d1 ♖xd1+ 27.♕xd1 ♕b4 28.b3 ♗f8 Glek only defeated Timmer (Haarlem 1994) after the latter blundered.

15. ♘d2-f3 ♕d4-c5

16. ♕e2-e4 ♕c5-b4?!

Risking an exchange of queens the Dutch Grandmaster rushes to destroy Short's pawn chain and offers a pawn sacrifice on the way. Later we will see that White's attack clearly outweighs his structural defects, while he can even take the pawn – 17.♗xd5 ed 18.♕xd5 ♗e6 19.♕d4 ♖fd8 20.♕xb4 ab 21.♗g5 ♖d7 22.b3. Therefore, Black should have again considered moving the bishop to d7.

17. ♗b3-c4!? ♘d5-b6

18. b2-b3 ♘b6xc4

19. b3xc4 ♖f8-e8
20. ♖e1-d1 ♕b4-c5
21. ♕e4-h4 b7-b6
22. ♗c1-e3 ♕c5-c6

Rogers suggested 22...♕f8, bringing the queen closer to the king. For example, the game might continue 23.♘g5 h5 24.♖ab1 ♗b7 25.♖d7 ♖e7 26.♘h7 ♖xd7 27.♘xf8 ♖xf8 and White has a marginal advantage in this position with asymmetrical material.

23. ♗e3-h6 ♗g7-h8
24. ♖d1-d8 ♗c8-b7?!

After 24...♗d7 25.♘d4 ♖axd8 26.♘xc6 ♗xc6 27.♕f4 ♖d7 28.♗g5 (Short) Black has insufficient compensation for the queen, a passive dark-squared bishop and no available invasion squares on the open file. But he isn't getting mated, which is the most important point!

25. ♖a1-d1 ♗h8-g7

In his commentary on the game Short missed that 25...♕xa4 also loses due to 26.♕e7! ♗xf3 27.gf ♕c6 28.♗g5! ♗xe5 29.♖1d7!

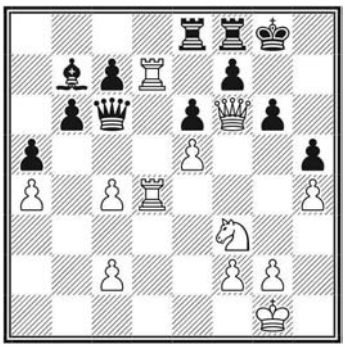
26. ♖d8-d7 ♖e8-f8

This prevents the king from escaping to the center, but 26...♗xe5 or 26...♕e4 are decisively met by 27.♖xf7!

27. ♗h6xg7 ♔g8xg7
28. ♖d1-d4 ♖a8-e8
29. ♕h4-f6+ ...

The Englishman carries out an exceedingly pretty manoeuvre that is hard to spot, while ignoring the simple win with 29.♕g5! and ♖d4-h4.

29. ... ♔g7-g8
30. h3-h4 h7-h5



31. ♔g1-h2! ♖e8-c8

If 31...♗c8 then 32.♘g5 ♗d7 33.g4! wins (or g2-g4 first, and then ♘f3-g5) 33...hg 34.h5 gh 36.♕h6. Now, however, Timman can only observe impassively the king's march to h6.

32. ♔h2-g3! ♖c8-e8
33. ♔g3-f4! ♗b7-c8
34. ♔f4-g5!

1-0

Short remarked that this game would be etched on his gravestone. Well, let's not dwell on that – the white king's march is so life-affirming!

So we have seen quite a hotchpotch with changing move orders, but Black should not seek comfort in the well-trodden paths where White has a certain advantage. But the secondary routes, such as bringing the knight to a6 in the Nunn – Howell example, promise him acceptable play.

Chapter 75. 5. ♗c4 ♘b6 6. ♗b3 ♗g7 7. ♘g5

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**g7-g6**
5.	**♗f1-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
6.	**♗c4-b3**	**♗f8-g7**
7.	**♘f3-g5**	**...**



White chooses a determined attack even before completing his development. Black needs to cover the f7 pawn with the help of either of two pawn moves. Castling, however, does nothing to prevent White from grabbing space and is an error, as can be seen from the following line: 7...0-0? 8.e6 f6 9.♘f7 ♕e8 10.d5. Black seems to have no way to break out other than resorting to sacrificing the exchange.

7. ... e7-e6

The old fashioned defense 7... d5 has in total been played more frequently. However, nearly all of those games came in the 20th century. For that reason, this line is illustrated by a game by the 12th world champion, played even before he won his title (Game 86).

8. ♕d1-f3 ...

Around half of games have been played in this line, and the other half have seen White strengthening his center with 8.f4 (Game 87).

8. ... ♕d8-e7

The queen is somewhat clumsy on d7 and White has various ways to secure an advantage. The two variations 8...♕d7 9.♘e4 de 10.♘f6+ ♗xf6 11.♕xf6 ♖g8 12.de ♕d4 13.♘c3 (13.0-0!?) 13...♘6d7 14.♕g5 ♕xe5+ 15.♕xe5 ♘xe5 16.♗g5 and 10.de ♗xe5 11.♘f6+ ♗xf6 12.♕xf6 ♖g8 13.♕h4 f5 14.♘c3 ♕g7 15.♗g5 h6 16.♗xh6 g5 17.♗xg7 gh 18.♗f6 (Haba – Polzin, Pardubice 1993) both leave White with the bishop pair and better development.

Black castles in Game 88.

9. ♘g5-e4 d6xe5

If 9...d5 10.♘f6+ ♗xf6 11.ef ♕d8 12.♗h6 then at the very least Black cannot castle kingside. 9... h6 prevents the bishop from moving to g5 at the cost of considerable concessions in the center: 10.ed cd 11.♗f4 d5 12.♘d6+ ♔f8 13.♘b5 e5 14.de g5 15.♗g3 h5 16.h3 h4 17.♗h2 ♗xe5 18.0-0 ♗xh2+ 19.♔xh2 (Black's pawns are weak

and his king is exposed) or 11... e5 12.de de 13.♗e3 f5 14.♕g3! fe 15.♕xg6+ ♔d8 16.♘c3 with an attack (Mokry – Brunner, Gausdal 1988).

10. ♗c1-g5 ♕e7-b4+

11. c2-c3 ♕b4-a5

Black maintains White's pawn majority under pressure. Lev Alburt has defended the black pieces here so frequently that the line is named after him.

12. ♗g5-f6 ...

12.d5!? has only been tested by Fishbein in his game against Alburt (Philadelphia 1988). Black successfully consolidated after 12... 0-0 13.de ♗xe6 14.♗xe6 fe 15.♕g4 ♖f5 16.0-0 ♘8d7 17.♖d1 ♖e8, but it is worth considering 13.♗e7 ♖e8 14.♗b4 ♕b5 15.♘a3 ♕d7 16.♘c5, chasing the queen back to base camp. 12...♘xd5 13.♗xd5 ed 14.♘f6+ ♔f8 15.b4 ♕a4 16.♘xd5 is probably also better for White.

Strong players have played the complicated line 12.♘f6+ ♔f8 13.d5 e4! (opening up the fifth rank for the queen), but their moves are hardly approved by the omniscient computer. We think that 14.♕g3 is suboptimal in view of 14...♘a6 15.de ♗xe6 16.♗xe6 h6! (if 16... fe?! 17.♘xe4 then White gets to fully coordinate his pieces) 17.♕f4 fe 18.♘d5+ ♔g8 19.♘e7+ ♔h7 20.h4 ♖hf8 21.♕xe4 (Arnold – Sutter, Zuerich 1994) 21... ♕e5 22.♕xe5 ♗xe5 23.h5 hg 24.hg+ ♔g7 25.♖h7+ ♔f6, and compensation for the bishop is insufficient. In the line 14.♕f4 ♘xd5 15.♗xd5 h6 16.♕xe4 ♘d7!? 17.♗xb7 ♕xg5 18.f4 ♕b5 19.♗xc8 ♖xc8 20.♘xd7+ ♕xd7 Black is close to equalizing.

12. ... ♗g7xf6

12...0-0 13.♗xg7 ♔xg7 14.♕f6+ ♔g8 15.♕xe5 merges with the main line, one move later.

13. ♕f3xf6 0-0

14. ♕f6xe5 ♕a5xe5

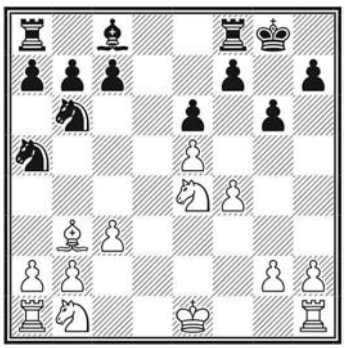
Ljubojevic scored a spectacular win against Alburt (New York 1985) after 14...♘c6 15.♕xc7 ♘xd4 16.0-0!? (16.♘a3!?) 16...♘xb3 17.ab ♕xa1 18.♘f6+ ♔g7? 19.♕e5 ♖d8 20.♘d2 ♕xb2 21.♘de4 ♕e2 22.♘d7+ (22.♘e8++! ♔f8 23.♕c5+ would have forced a quick mate) 22...♔h6 23.♕g5+ ♔g7 24.♕f6+ ♔h6 25.♘e5 ♖f8 26.f3 ♕e3+ 27.♔h1 ♘d7 28.♘g4+ ♔h5 29.♘g3 mate. However, he demonstrated a draw in his commentary to the game – 18... ♔h8 19.♕xe5 ♕xb2 20.♖d1 ♗d7 21.♘xd7+ f6 22.♘xf6 ♖f7 23.♘g4+ ♖g7 24.♘h6 ♕c2 25.♘f7+ ♔g8 26.♘h6+. Therefore, 15.♕f4!? ♘d7 16.0-0 e5 17.de ♕xe5 18.♕h4 is more promising (Magem – Navarro, Pamplona 2003).

15. d4xe5 ♘b8-c6

To get to the long diagonal the bishop is occasionally fianchettoed. The game Soltanici – B.Nevednichy (Kishinev 2014) saw Black reach a safe endgame: 15...♘8d7 16.f4 b6 17.♘bd2 ♗b7 18.0-0-0 ♘a6 19.h4

♘ac5 20.♗c2 f5 (this was certainly not forced) 21.♘xc5 ♘xc5 22.b4 ♘d7 23.♗b3 ♖fe8 24.♘f3 ♘f8 25.h5 ♗xf3 26.gf ♖ad8. But the bishop more often heads to c6 via d7: 15...♗d7 16.♘bd2 ♗c6 17.0-0-0 ♘8d7 18.f4 ♔g7 19.♖he1 a5 20.♗c2 h6 21.g3 a4 22.c4 ♘c8 23.♘f3 ♗xe4 24.♗xe4 ♘c5 25.♔c2 ♘e7 26.♔c3 ♖fd8 27.♗c2 ♘c6 with a draw soon after (Yemelin – Gordievsky, St. Petersburg 2012).

16. f2-f4 ♘c6-a5



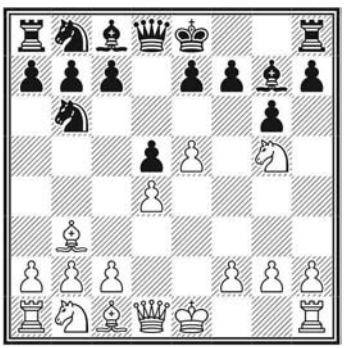
Black plans to take the bishop (or if 17.♗c2 ♘ac4 and the knight aims at both b2 and e3). At the Interzonal in Taxco (1985) Alburt played black against all of Oll, Sisniega and Timman. Even his defeat by Timman had nothing to do with the opening (17.♘bd2 ♘xb3 18.ab ♘d5 19.0-0 ♖d8 20.c4 ♘e3 21.♖fc1 ♔g7 22.♔f2 ♘g4+ 23.♔e2 h5 24.h3 ♘h6 25.♘f6 ♗d7 26.♖d1 ♗c6 27.♘f3 ♖xd1 28.♖xd1 ♘g8 29.♘xg8 ♔xg8 with equality). A more recent example was the game Istratescu – Leutwyler (Zuerich 2012): 17.♘bd2 ♘xb3 18.♘xb3 ♖d8 19.♘d4 ♘d5 20.g3 b6 21.0-0-0 ♗b7 22.♖he1 ♔g7 23.♖d2 ♘e7 24.♘g5 ♔g8 25.♖ed1. The king's walkabouts have not particularly harmed Black, but a miscalculation messed up his position – 25... h6? 26.♘f5!! ♖xd2 27.♘xh6+ ♔g7 28.♖xd2 ♔xh6 29.♖d7 with White's crushing advantage despite the loss of a piece.

Game 86

A.Karpov – K.Grigorian

Leningrad 1971

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**g7-g6**
5.	**♗f1-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
6.	**♗c4-b3**	**♗f8-g7**
7.	**♘f3-g5**	**d6-d5**



Obviously, there is more justification for this move now than on move 6. Black can chase the knight with tempo without significantly weakening his position.

8. 0-0 ...

This is nearly always accompanied by f2-f4 and these moves can be played in either order. If 8.h4 then it's better for the black king to head for the queenside: 8... f6 9.ef ef 10.♘h3 ♘c6 11.♘f4 ♕e7+ 12.♗e3 ♗e6 13.0-0 0-0-0 14.♖e1 ♖he8 with a fine position. The sacrifice 8.♕e2 0-0 9.h4 f6 10.♘xh7!? ♔xh7 11.h5 (I.Zaitsev) is a mistake in view of 11...♖h8! 12.hg+? ♔xg6.

8. ... 0-0

8...f6?! 9.ef ef?! 10.♖e1+ ♔f8 11.♕f3 is no good, although 8... h6 9.♘f3 ♗g4 and e7-e6 is a strategically sensible decision. So it's more accurate for White to first play f2-f4 and only then castle.

9. f2-f4 f7-f6

10. ♘g5-f3 ♗c8-g4

Karpov crushed Torre in the final round of the Interzonal in Leningrad: 10...♘c6 11.c3 ♗f5 12.♘bd2 (12.♘h4 ♗xb1 13.♖xb1 f5 is harmless) 12...fe 13.fe ♕d7 14.♖f2 ♘a5 15.♗c2 ♗xc2 16.♕xc2 ♕f5 17.♕d1 e6?! 18.♘f1 c5 19.h3 cd 20.cd ♘c6 21.b3 ♘d7 22.♗a3 ♖f7? 23.g4 ♕e4 24.♘g5 trapping the queen. The Philippine GM was off his game, but apart from the blunder on move 22 he shouldn't have weakened his dark squares in particular (instead of the acceptable 17...c5).

11. ♘b1-d2 ...

Provoking the exchange 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♖xf3 is justified if White wants to play f4-f5, but it is hard to execute this advance. For example, 12...♘c6 13.c3 ♕d7 14.♗e3 ♘a5 15.♘d2 ♘xb3 16.ab a5 17.♕c2 a4 18.ba ♖xa4 19.♖xa4 ♕xa4 20.b3 (Aung – Villamayor, Bangkok 2004) 20...♕c6 21.g4 f5 with equality.

11. ... ♘b8-c6

12. h2-h3 ♗g4-f5

With the help of 12...♗xf3 13.♘xf3 f5 and e7-e6 Grigorian could set up a virtually impregnable fortress. He was probably counting on leaving himself some sort of winning chances, but in that case he shouldn't have continued 7...d5.

13. ♖f1-f2 ♔g8-h8

14. c2-c3 g7-g5?!

14...♗h6 15.♘f1 ♗e4 isn't logical, as Black had earlier rejected exchanging the bishop. Nevertheless, that would have been better than voluntarily weakening the light squares.

15. e5xf6 e7xf6

16. ♘d2-f1 h7-h6

17. ♘f1-g3 ♗f5-g6

18. ♗b3-c2 ♕d8-e8

19. b2-b3 ...

Before grabbing control over the light squares Karpov plans to dominate the dark squares. Grigorian should have moved his rook to g8, in order to find the right moment to challenge the enemy bishop with his own. Black preferred to block the diagonal, but he has ended up with broken pawn structures and a strategically hopeless position.

19. ... ♘b6-c8
20. ♗c1-a3 ♘c8-d6
21. ♗a3xd6 c7xd6
22. ♖f2-e2 ♕e8-f7
23. ♕d1-b1 ♗g6xc2
24. ♕b1xc2 ♖f8-e8
25. ♖a1-e1 ...

Black would like to bring his king to f8 in order to fight for the open file, but the weakness on d6 ruins that plan. His next move allows the rook to invade, after which resistance becomes extremely painful.

25. ... ♘c6-e7
26. f4-f5 ♗g7-f8
27. ♖e2-e6 ♘e7-g8
28. ♘f3-h2 ♖e8-c8
29. ♖e1-e3 ♖c8-c6
30. ♕c2-e2 ♖a8-c8
31. ♕e2-f3 ♕f7-c7
32. ♘g3-e2 ♕c7-a5

He may have managed to defend the d6 pawn without spilling too much of his own blood, but saving the pawn on d5 has entailed moving his queen too far from the king. But the best seats never stay empty for long – Karpov's pieces now start to appear near the black king.

33. a2-a4 ♖c6-c7
34. ♖e6-e8 ♗f8-g7
35. ♕f3-h5 ♕a5-b6?

Black may still be able to save the king, albeit at the cost of material. After 35...♖xe8 36.♕xe8 ♕b6 37.♖e6 ♕xb3? 38.♕d8 Black has to return the piece due to ♖e6-e8. In the event of 37...♕c6 38.♕b8 ♖c8 39.♕xa7 Black has only lost a pawn so far but he has no chances of saving the game.

36. ♘h2-g4 ♖c8xe8
37. ♖e3xe8 ♖c7-e7
38. ♘g4xh6! ♖e7xe8
39. ♘h6-f7#

Game 87
Ju.Radulski – N.Bozovic
Belgrade 2007

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 g7-g6
5. ♗f1-c4 ♘d5-b6
6. ♗c4-b3 ♗f8-g7
7. ♘f3-g5 e7-e6
8. f2-f4 ...



No matter how much the pawn center is exposed to pressure and undermining attacks it continues to cramp Black and provides cover for the white army's attack.

8. ... d6xe5
9. f4xe5 ...

In the line 6...♘c6 7.♘g5 e6

8.f4 de White is forced to capture with the d-pawn, but here for some reason he sometimes makes the capture voluntarily. After 9.de ♕xd1+ 10.♔xd1 ♗d7 11.♘c3 ♗c6 12.♘ge4 ♘8d7 13.♗e3 h6 14.♔e2 g5 15.g3 ♘d5 (15...0-0-0!?) 16.♘xd5 (Sutovsky – Reinderman, Wijk aan Zee 2010) 16...ed 17.♘c3 d4 18.♗xd4 ♗xh1 19.♖xh1 0-0-0 Black's chances are no worse in a complicated endgame.

9. ... c7-c5

10. c2-c3 ...

The rare line 10.♕f3 0-0 11.dc ♘6d7 12.♕h3 h6 is somewhat similar to the 8.♕f3 variation. Now, 13.♘xf7?! ♖xf7 14.♗xe6 ♘xe5! 15.♗xc8 ♘bd7! 16.♗xb7?! ♗xe5! leads to the death of the white king. However, the unclear continuation 13.♘e4!? h5 14.♗g5 ♕a5+ 15.♕c3 ♕xc3+ 16.♘bxc3 ♗xe5 is of practical interest.

The key position for assessing the entire 8.f4 line arises after 10.0-0 0-0 11.c3 cd 12.cd ♘c6 13.♘f3 f6. The half-forced variation 14.♘c3 fe 15.♗g5 ♕d7 16.de ♘xe5 17.♘xe5 ♖xf1+ 18.♕xf1 ♕d4+ 19.♔h1 ♕xe5 20.♗f4 ♕f5 ended in a draw between Mukhametov and Golubovich (Bern 1995) – after 21.♗e3 ♕xf1+ 22.♖xf1 ♗xc3 23.bc ♘d5 24.♗d4 ♗d7 it's hard for either side to make progress. Black's extra pawn is of no use as he cannot deploy his forces properly.

A different approach is to play 14.ef ♕xf6 15.♗e3 ♘d5 16.♗f2 ♘f4, and then 17.♘bd2 ♕f5 18.♘c4 (18.♔h1 ♘a5!?) 18... ♘h3+ 19.gh ♕xf3 20.♕xf3 ♖xf3 21.♖ad1 ♖xh3 22.♘d6 ♘a5 23.♗a4 (Vokarev – Solozhenkin, Maykop 1998) 23...♘c6 24.♖c1 ♖h5, but this achieves nothing more than equality. In the game A.Sokolov – Timman (Tilburg 1987) White continued 17.♘c3 ♘h3+ 18.gh ♕xf3 19.♕xf3 ♖xf3 20.♘b5 ♔h8?! 21.♔g2 ♖d3 22.♖ad1 ♖xd1 23.♖xd1 ♗d7 24.♘c7 ♖c8 25.♘xe6 ♘a5 26.♘c5, but he didn't have full compensation for the pawn. The game's commentator Yurkov uncovered a clever trap: 20...♗d7! 21.♘c7? ♘xd4! 22.♘xa8 ♘e2+ 23.♔g2 ♖xb3! (Jensen – Brautsch, Aarhus 1988 and Schwaegli – Hirt, Switzerland 1993) 24.ab ♗c6 mate. He suggested that White heads for a draw with 21.d5 ♘a5 22.♘c7 ♘xb3 23.ab ♖c8 24.♘xe6 ♗xe6 25.de ♖xb3, which at least questions ♘c3-b5.

10. ... c5xd4

11. c3xd4 ♘b8-c6

12. ♗c1-e3 ...

After 12.♘f3 f6 13.♘c3 fe 14.♗g5 the postponed castling benefited Mukhametov in his game with Tabatadze (Sofia 1994): 14... ♗f6? 15.♗xf6 ♕xf6 16.de ♘xe5 17.0-0 ♘xf3+ 18.♖xf3 ♕e5 19.♕d2 ♗d7 20.♖e1 ♕a5? (he should have sacrificed the exchange with 20... ♕c5+ 21.♔h1 0-0-0 22.♘e4 ♕c7 23.♘d6+ ♔b8 24.♘f7) 21.♕d6 0-0-0 22.♖c1 ♗c6 23.♗xe6+ ♘d7

24.♘d5 ♖he8 25.♗xd7+ ♖xd7 26.♖xc6+! bc 27.♕xc6+, and 1-0. The correct move was 14...♕d7, and sidestepping the main theoretical line just drained away the resources for a struggle in Campora versus Polzin (Bern 1992): 14...♕d7 15.de 0-0 16.♗f6 ♗xf6 17.ef ♖xf6 18.0-0 ♕xd1 19.♖axd1 ♖f8 20.♘g5 ♖xf1+ 21.♔xf1 h6 22.♘xe6 ♗xe6 23.♗xe6+ ♔g7.

12. ... ♘b6-d5
13. ♗b3xd5 e6xd5
14. 0-0 ...

After 14.♘c3 0-0 15.0-0 h6 16.♘f3 ♗e6 17.♖c1 ♕d7 18.♕d2 ♔h7 19.♗f4 ♖ac8 20.h3 ♘e7 21.g4 ♖c4 22.♔h2 ♖fc8 23.♕d3 ♘c6 24.♖ce1 a5 25.♖f2 a4 26.a3 ♗f8 27.♘e2 ♘a5 Iordachescu against ♔holmov (Moscow 1996) gradually gained equality with operations on the queenside. Instead of castling (with a likely transposition to the ♔holmov – Iordachescu game) Bozovic challenged the e5 pawn and the game became very sharp.

14. ... f7-f6
15. e5xf6 ♗g7xf6



16. ♖f1xf6! ...

This was only unexpected at first glance. Bearing in mind the weakness on d5, Black's exposed king and lagging in development, White isn't giving up that much here. All the more so, as 16.♕d2 0-0 17.♘c3 ♖e8 would not bring him any advantage.

16. ... ♕d8xf6
17. ♘b1-c3 ♗c8-e6

White has a stable initiative in the variation 17...0-0 18.♘xd5 ♕d8 (18...♕g7 19.♘f4) 19.♘c3 ♘e7 20.♕b3+ ♔g7 21.d5. Maybe it's objectively better for Black to head for simplifications (17... ♘e7 18.♕b3 h6 19.♘xd5 ♘xd5 20.♕xd5 ♕f5 21.♕d6 hg 22.♖e1 ♗e6 23.♗d2 ♖f8 24.♖xe6 ♔f7 25.♖e5 ♕f6 26.♕xf6+ ♔xf6, with a likely draw in the endgame).

18. ♘c3-b5 ♔e8-d7?

The correct continuation is 18... 0-0 19.♘c7 ♖ae8 20.♘xe8 ♖xe8 21.♕b3 b6 22.♖e1, where White's advantage is insignificant. Bozovic was counting on sitting the game out behind the blocked central pawns and probably missed his opponent's next move.

19. ♘g5-e4! d5xe4
20. d4-d5 ♗e6xd5?

And this is a miscalculation, albeit in what is already a very tough position (20...♖hd8 21.dc++ ♔e7 22.♕c1!).

21. ♕d1xd5+ ♔d7-c8
22. ♘b5-d6+ ♔c8-c7
23. ♖a1-f1! ♕f6xd6

24. ♖f1-f7+! ...

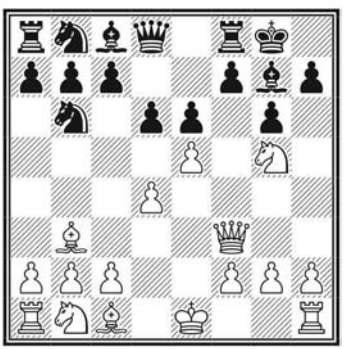
Winning the queen after 24.♗f4 is clearly an amnesty: the resistance will be drawn out and may prove successful if White isn't careful.

24. ... ♘c6-e7
25. ♗e3-f4 ♕d6xf4
1-0

Black resigned, seeing that Radulski will take not with his queen but with the knight, which is checkmate.

Game 88
L.-D.Nisipeanu – D.Reinderman
Rijeka 2010

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 g7-g6
5. ♗f1-c4 ♘d5-b6
6. ♗c4-b3 ♗f8-g7
7. ♘f3-g5 e7-e6
8. ♕d1-f3 0-0



Immediately evacuating the king to a flank that is under fire from the white pieces is a big decision. This line assumes that the black queen will have work to do along the d-file.

9. ♕f3-h3 ...

After 9.♘e4 de 10.de ♘8d7 11.♗g5 ♘xe5 12.♕g3 f6 13.♗f4 ♘d5 14.♗xe5 fe 15.0-0 ♕e7 (Anka – Schroll, Kecskemet 1991) White has compensation for the pawn. But rather than this being an eventually forgotten attack, this compensation is an 'eternal' blockade of the doubled pawns.

9. ... h7-h6
10. ♘g5-f3 ...

If 10.♘e4 de 11.de the queen finds a good square on d4. The ending after 11...♕d4 12.♘bc3 ♘d5 13.f4 g5!? 14.fg ♘xc3 15.♘xc3 ♕xe5+ 16.♕e3 ♕xe3+ 17.♗xe3 hg 18.♗xg5 looks more pleasant for White, so Black should consider 13...a5 14.♕f3 ♘xc3 15.bc ♕b6.

10. ... d6xe5

Anand's win against Dolman in a simul (Amsterdam 1991) contained a convincing refutation of 10...g5? After 11.♕g3 de 12.h4 e4 13.hg ef 14.gh ♕f6 15.gf ♕g6 16.hg ♕xg7 17.♕h2 Black resigned as he was about to lose his queen.

11. d4xe5 ♘b8-c6

After 11...c5 12.c3 h5 13.0-0 ♘c6 14.♖e1 ♕c7 15.♕g3 ♘e7 (Petrov – Andreev, Albena 2010) 16.♗g5 ♘f5 17.♕f4 ♗d7 18.♘bd2 the e5 pawn is out of danger and significantly cramps Black. The principled approach is 12.♗xh6!? c4 13.♗e3 ♘8d7 (otherwise the

king will be checked from c5 as it dashes for the center) 14.♘g5 ♖e8 15.♕h7+ ♔f8 16.♘d2 cb 17.♘de4 with the initiative.

12. ♗c1xh6 ♘c6xe5

All this was first played in the game Shamkovich versus Alburt (USA 1981). It continued 13.♘xe5 ♗xe5 14.♘c3 ♖e8 15.♖d1 ♕f6 16.♘e4 ♕h8 17.c3 ♗d7 18.0-0 ♗c6 19.f4 ♗g7 20.♗xg7 ♕xh3 21.♘f6+ ♔g7 22.♘xe8+ ♖xe8 23.gh ♖h8. White shouldn't lose this given he is the exchange up, but in the end his damaged pawn structure proved fatal.

13. ♘f3-g5 ...

Two months before the commented game 13.♗xg7 ♘xf3+ 14.♕xf3 ♔xg7 15.♘d2 ♕f6 16. 0-0-0 a5 17.a3 a4 18.♗a2 ♖a5 19.♕xf6+ ♔xf6 20.f4 ♗d7 21. ♘e4+ ♔e7 22.h4 ♘c8 23.♘g5 ♘d6 was played. It ended in a draw, which was the logical conclusion to an uneventful game (A.Muzychuk – Reinderman, Wijk aan Zee 2010). The Dutchman would likely have been happy to repeat this scenario against an opponent rated much higher than he was, but Nisipeanu takes a different path.

13. ... ♘e5-d3+!?

Presumably, this was home preparation. The underdeveloped queenside in the example Boudre – Petit (France 1991) was incapable of inspiring Reinderman – 13...♕f6 14.♗xg7 ♕xg7 15.♘c3 ♘d5 16.0-0-0 c6 17.♖he1.

14. c2xd3 ♗g7xb2

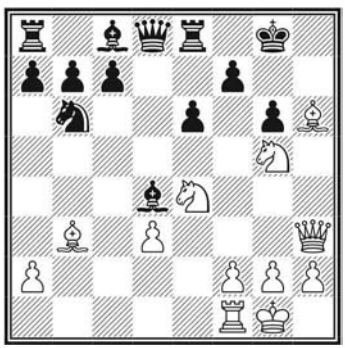
15. ♘b1-d2! ...

He is right to bring his knight closer to the enemy king as soon as possible. The computer promises him success after 15.♘h7!? ♘d7? 16.♗g5 ♕e8 17.♘a3! ♗xa3 18.♘b5 or 15...e5? 16.g4 ♗xg4 (16...e4 17.♘xf8 ♗xa1 19.de) 17.♕xg4 ♔xh7 18.♗g5 ♕d6 19.♕h4+ ♔g7 20.♕h6+ ♔g8 21.♖g1, but if Black continues 15...♖e8 16.♗g5 f6 17.♕h6 fg 18.♕xg6+ ♔h8 19.♕h6 ♔g8 then the computer only sees a draw by move repetition. So let's keep this sharp regrouping of minor pieces at the back of our mind for now!

15. ... ♗b2xa1

16. 0-0 ♗a1-d4

17. ♘d2-e4 ♖f8-e8



18. ♘g5xf7? ...

It looks like 18.♘h7! wins (18...♘d7 19.♗g5 f6 20.♕h6 fg 21.♕xg6+ ♗g7 22.f4! or 18...♘d5 19.♗g5 f6 20.♕h6 fg 21.♗xd5 ♖e7 22.♕xg6+ ♖g7 23.♘ef6+ ♗xf6 24.♘xf6+ ♔f8 25.♕h6

♔f7 26.♘h5 ♖g8 27.f4! or 20... ♔f7 21.♗xf6! ♗xf6 22.♘exf6 ♖h8 23.♘g4 ♕g8 24.♗xd5 ♕xh7 25.♕f4+).

18. ... ♕d8-d7?

After 18...♔xf7 19.♕f3+ ♔g8 20.♕g4 ♔f7 White needs the knight to join the attack that he has already given up and so the game ends by repetition. However, assuming that his extra rook allows Black to play to win Reinderman fatally miscalculates.

19. ♗h6-e3! ♔g8xf7
20. ♕h3-h7+ ♗d4-g7
21. ♘e4-g5+ ♔f7-f6
22. ♘g5-f3! ♕d7-d6
23. ♗e3-g5+ ♔f6-f7
24. ♗e3-h6 ♕d6-f8

Nothing changes after 24...♖g8 25.♘g5+ ♔e8 26.♗xg7 ♖xg7 27.♕xg7: White regains the material and retains a murderous initiative.

25. ♘f3-e5+ ♔f7-f6
26. ♕h7xg6+ ♔f6-e7
27. ♗h6xg7 ♕f8-f5
28. ♕g6-h6 ♘b6-d5
29. g2-g4
1-0

In reply to 7.♘g5 advancing the d-pawn condemns Black to a passive and unpleasant but not totally hopeless defense. In reply to 7...e6 the queen's move to f3 promises White somewhat better prospects, sometimes in lines that have yet to be properly investigated (Fishbein – Alburt).

Chapter 76. 5. ♗c4 ♘b6 6. ♗b3 ♗g7 7. a4

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 g7-g6
5. ♗f1-c4 ♘d5-b6
6. ♗c4-b3 ♗f8-g7
7. a2-a4 ...

Diagram



This pawn attack against the knight on b6 has to be dealt with in all lines of the Alekhine Defense – but especially so when White creates threats along the a2-g8 diagonal.

7. ... a7-a5

Lev Alburt gained a reputation

as a fierce devotee of the 7...d5 line, and Serbian master Ivan Marinkovic subsequently started to play it all the time. This line has yet to be fully analyzed. After 8.a5 ♘c4 9.♕e2 b5 10.ab ♘xb6 11.0-0 a5 12.♖e1 a4 13.♗a2 ♗a6 14.♕e3 e6 White still has to wake up his queenside pieces, while after 11.♗d2!? 0-0 12.♗b4 a5!? 13.♖xa5 ♗a6 14.♕d2 ♘c6 15.♖a3 ♘xb4 16.♕xb4 e6 17.♘bd2 f6 18.ef ♖xf6 19.♖a5 ♗f8 20.♕c3 ♗d6 (Ziatdinov – Marinkovic, Cacak 1991) the king's safety has yet to be assured.

In response to 9.♘bd2, moving the b-pawn loses its point: 9...b5 10.ab ♘xb6 11.0-0 0-0 12.♖e1 a5 13.c3 ♗g4 14.h3 ♗xf3 15.♘xf3 e6 16.♗c2, and the white army is ready to attack the kingside. After 9...♘xd2 10.♗xd2 0-0 11.0-0 ♗g4 12.h3 ♗xf3 13.♕xf3 e6 14.♗b4 ♖e8 15.♗a4 c6 16.c3 f6 17.ef ♗xf6 18.♖fe1 ♘d7 19.♖e2 e5 20.c4! dc 21.♖ac1 ♔g7 22.♗c3 (Zapata – Alburt, New York 1988) Black's center falls apart, but he could play 16...♘a6 17.♗d6 ♗f8 to exchange queens and fix his defense.

The principled and rather sharp continuation 7...de is analyzed in Game 89.

8. ♘f3-g5 ...

8.♕e2 leads us to Chapter 74 (and to Game 85 in particular). On the other hand, 8.ed cd 9.0-0 0-0 with the added pawn advances as per Chapter 73 is mostly ignored these days. There are no interesting recent games in this line, and theory hasn't advanced much since the ancient game Keres – Jansa (Budapest 1970). That game continued 10.♘c3 ♗g4 11.♘b5 ♘c6 12.c3 ♘a7 13.♘xa7 (the knight didn't hold out for long on its strong square!) 13...♖xa7 14.♖e1 e6 15.d5 e5 16.h3 ♗xf3 17.♕xf3 ♘d7 18.♗e3 b6 19.♕e2 f5 with fully equal play.

8. ... e7-e6

The manoeuvring line 8...d5 is not materially different from the variations from Game 85. White can play 9.f4 0-0 10.0-0 f6 11.♘f3 ♗g4 12.♕e1 ♘c6 13.c3 ♕d7 14.♘a3 fe 15.de ♘d8 (he should have played this without exchanging) 16.♕h4 ♗f5 17.♗e3 (Valerga – Zarnicki, Villa Martelli 2007), and if 17...♘xa4 then 18.♖f2! with the threat of 19.g4!

9. f2-f4 ...

The first significant difference from the lines in Chapter 75: if 9.♕f3 ♕e7 10.♘e4 d5 11.♘f6+?! ♗xf6 12.ef ♕b4+ then he can't block with a pawn. After 13.♘c3 ♘c6 14.0-0 ♘d4 15.♕g3?! ♕xc3! 16.bc ♘e2+ 17.♔h1 ♘xg3+ 18.fg c5 19.♗e3 ♘d5 20.c4 d4 (Velicka – Hudecek, Bratislava 1992) White isn't just a pawn down, his bishop has also gone – buried alive!. If 11.♘ec3 then Black has a pleasant choice between 11...♕b4 and 11...f6 12.ef ♗xf6.

The second significant difference is similar to the first: after 9.♕f3

♕e7 10.♘e4 de 11.♗g5 ♕b4+ White still doesn't have c2-c3 available. It's equal opportunities in a complicated position: 12.♘bd2 ♘8d7! 13.♘f6+ ♗xf6 14.♗xf6 ♗xf6 15.♕xf6 0-0 16.♕xe5 ♘d7 17.♕e3 c5 18.dc ♕xc5 (Kasparov) or 16.c3 ♘d7! 17.♕xe6!? fe 18.♗xe6+ ♔g7 19.cb ed 20.0-0 ab 21.♖fc1 c6 22.♘b3 d3 23.♖d1 ♘e5 24.♗xc8 ♖axc8 25.♘c5 with a truce declared (Root – Beelby, New York 1989).

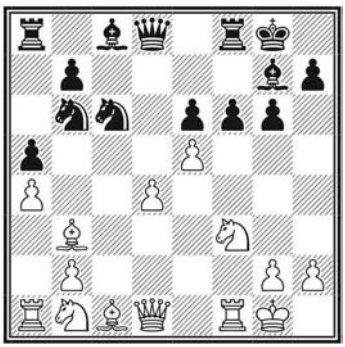
9. ... d6xe5
10. f4xe5 c7-c5
11. 0-0 0-0

One more line from Kasparov: 11...♕xd4+?! 12.♕xd4 cd 13.♖xf7! ♗xe5 14.♗f4! ♘c6 15.♗xe5 ♘xe5 16.♖c7 with a clear advantage. In his book Garry Kasparov on Garry Kasparov the thirteenth world champion provided an entire gold mine of variations in this subject due to an exhilarating win in this line in his youth.

12. c2-c3 c5xd4

And now for Kasparov's game against Palatnik (Daugavpils 1978): 12...♘c6?! 13.♘e4 ♘d7 (13... cd? 14.♗g5 ♕d5 15.♘f6+ ♗xf6 16.♗xf6 h5 17.♕c1 ♔h7 18.♖f3! with the idea of transferring the rook to h3 and sacrificing it on h5) 14.♗e3 ♘e7 15.♗g5! cd 16.cd h6 17.♗h4 g5 18.♗f2 ♘g6 19.♘bc3 ♕e7 20.♗c2! b6 21.♗e3 ♗a6 22.♖f2 ♘h8? 23.♗xg5! hg 24.♕h5 f5 25.♘xg5 ♖f7 (25...♘f6 26.♘d5!!) 26.♗xf5! ♖xf5 27.♖xf5 ef 28.♘d5, and ten moves later Black admitted defeat, having lost his entire army. The conclusion is that the exchange to saddle White with a weak pawn should be carried out immediately.

13. c3xd4 ♘b8-c6
14. ♘g5-f3 f7-f6



With the a-pawns on their starting squares (Chapter 75) we would only take a quick look at this position. However, here it is worth analyzing in detail.

15. ♘b1-c3 ...

15.ef ♕xf6 16.♗e3 ♘d5 17.♗f2 ♘f4 18.♘c3 ♘h3+ 19.gh ♕xf3 20.♕xf3 ♖xf3 21.d5 (the ♘c3-b5 manoeuvre from the previous chapter is now totally impossible) 21...♘d4 22.♗xd4 ♗xd4+ 23.♔g2 ♖xf1 24.♖xf1 ed 25.♗xd5+ ♔g7 26.♖f7+ ♔h6 27.♘e4 ♗f5 is insufficient for an advantage (Kuijf – Blees, Hilversum 1989). Kavalek quickly gained a decisive advantage against Alburt (USA 1981) after 18.♘bd2 ♕f5 19.♔h1 ♕g4 20.♗g3 ♘h5 21.♗d6 ♖e8 22.♘c4 ♖a6

23.d5 ed 24.♕xd5+ ♗e6 25.♕b5, but this happened because Black's forces were overly focused on the kingside. He should have rearranged his pieces to capture the central pawn: 18...♕d8 19.♘e4 ♘xd4! 20.♘xd4 ♗xd4 21.♗xd4 ♕xd4 22.♕xd4 ♘e2+ 23.♔h1 ♘xd4 24.♗c4 ♖xf1+ 25.♖xf1 ♔g7 26.♘g5 ♘f5, and it's high time to agree a draw.

15. ... f6xe5

15...♘d5 (Janev) isn't any good due to 16.ef ♘xf6 17.♖e1 ♘d5 18.♗xf6 ♗xf6 19.♖c1, and Black's queenside remains undeveloped.

16. ♗c1-g5 ♕d8-d7

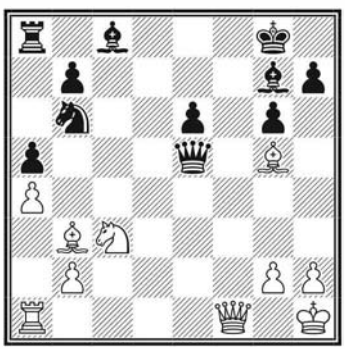
17. d4xe5 ♘c6xe5?!

Given the subsequent events he should have challenged his opponent to capture the fortress materializing after 17...♕xd1 18.♖axd1 ♘xe5 19.♘xe5 ♖xf1+ 20.♔xf1 ♗xe5 21.♗e3 ♗xc3 22.♖d8+ ♔f7 23.bc ♘d7. This is virtually impossible.

18. ♘f3xe5 ♖f8xf1+

19. ♕d1xf1 ♕d7-d4+

20. ♔g1-h1 ♕d4xe5



The third significant difference from the similar line in Chapter 75 (this time in White's favor) is the attack on the undefended knight via 21.♗d8! The first player to adopt this line was Marinus Kuijf (playing against Blees, Hilversum 1990), but the bishop's pirouette became famous following Grischuk's win against Ponomariov (Torshavn 2000). The retreat with tempo won White time to attack and even built a smothered mate: 21...♕c5 22.♘e4 ♕b4 23.♘g5 ♔h8 24.♕f7 ♗d7 25.♗xe6! ♖xd8 26.♕g8+! ♖xg8 27.♘f7 mate. If 22...♕c6 23.♘g5 ♘d5 24.♕f7+?! ♔h8 25.♖f1 (which was played between Kuijf and Blees, as well as in a game between two little-known Spaniards) 25...♘e3 26.♖g1 ♘d5 then it's hard to avoid a repetition of moves, but White can improve with 24.♖c1! ♕d7 25.♘xe6! ♕xe6 26.♖e1 ♗e5 27.♗c7 (Kasparov).

Even before Ponomariov's troubles, Felsberger mated Wach (Austria 1991) after 21...♘d5 22.♘xd5 ed 23.♖e1 ♕f5 24.♗xd5+ ♔f8 25.♗e7+ ♔e8 26.♕b5+ ♗d7 27.♗f6+, while Andrei Sokolov dispatched Dubois (France 1995): 21...♖a6 22.♖d1 h6 (22...♘a8 23.♘d5! ed 24.♖e1) 23.♕d3 ♔h7 24.♗c2 ♕h5 25.g4 (25.♘e4 also works) 25...♕xg4 26.♖g1 ♕f5 27.♕e2 ♕f8 28.♖xg6 ♔h8 29.♕d3 ♕f7 30.♗f6! Hence the position on the diagram is quite sorry for Black.

Game 89
S.Voitsekhovsky – D.Ayupov
Kazan 2013

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**g7-g6**
5.	**♗f1-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
6.	**♗c4-b3**	**♗f8-g7**
7.	**a2-a4**	**d6xe5**



8. a4-a5 ...

If 8.♘xe5?! then, obviously, Black continues 8...♗xe5 9.de ♕xd1+ 10.♔xd1 ♘c6, and then 11.a5 ♘d7 12.e6 fe 13.♗xe6 ♘de5 14.♗xc8 ♖xc8 15.f3 (15. ♖a4 followed by a choice between f2-f3 and f2-f4 is more flexible) 15...♖d8+ 16.♗d2 0-0 17.b3 g5 18.h3 ♘g6 19.♔c1 ♘f4 20.♖a4 ♖d4 21.♖xd4 ♘xd4 22.♖e1 ♘xg2 23.♖e7 ♖f7 24.♖e8+ ♖f8 25.♖e7 ♖f7 led to a draw by repetition (Pikula – Sutter, Biel 1996). Davies suggests that Black can seek an advantage with 10...♗g4+ 11.f3 ♗e6 12.♗xe6 fe, however, 14.♗h6 ♘c6 15.♖a4 easily maintains equality.

8. ... ♘b6-d7

Grandmaster Alburt has also left his mark on the 8...♘d5 line. After 9.de c6 10.h3 ♘d7 11.♗xd5 cd 12.♗f4 e6 13.0-0 0-0 14.♘c3 f6 15.ef ♗xf6 16.♗g3 he obtained a difficult position against Kudrin (Los Angeles 1991), but it's easy to improve Black's play here (for example, via 10...♗e6 and 11... ♘d7). 9.♘xe5 is somewhat more promising. In the line 9...0-0 10. 0-0 c5?! (10...c6 is more prudent) 11.♘xf7! ♔xf7 12.♕f3+ ♔g8 13.♕xd5+ ♕xd5 14.♗xd5+ e6 15.♗e4 cd 16.♗g5 ♘c6 (Nunn – Schroll, Vienna 1991) 17.a6!? ♖b8 18.♘d2 White maintains a strategic bind on his opponent thanks to the key aces of the 7.a4 line – the further march of the a-pawn and tactics along the a2-g8 diagonal.

9. ♗c4xf7+! ...

By retreating, the knight has cut the bishop away from e6. So with the help of a simple trick the white knight invades the enemy camp. 9.de ♘xe5 10.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 11.♘xe5 ♗xe5 12.♗xf7 e6 13.♗g5 ♔d7 14.♖a3!? is less effective (Gasanov – Gozzoli, Baku 2002). It's not a good idea to take the pawn on b2 here due to 15.♖e3, but 14... ♘c6 15.♖d3+ ♗d6 16.♖h3 ♘e5 17.♗f6 ♖f8 18.♗xe5 ♖xf7 19.♗xd6 cd firmly maintains equality.

9. ... ♔e8xf7

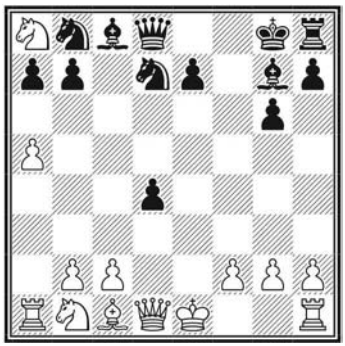
10. ♘f3-g5+ ♔f7-g8
11. ♘g5-e6 ...

Obviously, he didn't carry out the sacrifice simply to win the piece back with 11.♕f3+ ♘f6 12.de. After 12...♗g4 13.♕b3+ ♕d5 (13...♘d5? 14.♖a4!) 14.ef ♕xb3 15.cb ef 16.♘e4 ♘c6 17.0-0 ♘d4 18.♖a4 ♘xb3 19.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 20.♖xg4 ♘xa5 (Dudek – Rudolph, Germany 1997) Black has got to the endgame a pawn ahead, although a draw remains the most likely outcome.

11. ... ♕d8-e8
12. ♘e6xc7 ♕e8-d8

This allows White to force a draw by retreating the knight to e6 – which weaker players have sometimes done against stronger opponents (or both players agreed to play these moves earlier...). 12... ♕f7? avoids repeating moves, but it takes Black's eyes off the important c7 square. Play may continue 13.♘xa8 ed 14.0-0 ♘a6 15.c3 h6 16.cd ♔h7 17.♘a3 ♘f6 18.b4! ♘xb4 19.♘c7 a6 20.♕a4 ♘c6 21.♗b2 with the threat of 22.♘xa6 and a clear advantage (Lau – Posch, Austria 1996). Polaczek recommends 13.de, while Gutman suggests 13.d5 ♘f6 14.♘c3 ♘a6 15.♘xa8 ♗d7 16.d6! ed 17.♕xd6 – and in either case Black is close to defeat.

13. ♘c7xa8 e5xd4



White has won the exchange, but prospects for the 'conqueror' on a8 are worrisome. Given the precarious position of the black king it makes sense for White to open the game.

14. c2-c3 ...

In the game Z.Almasi – de la Villa (Pamplona 2000) White postponed the attack on Black's central pawn by a move: 14.0-0 ♘c6 15.c3 ♘c5 16.b4 dc 17.♕xd8+ ♘xd8 18.bc c2 19.♘c3 ♗xc3 20.♖a3 ♗f6 21.♘c7 ♘c6 22.♘d5 ♔f7 23.♘xf6 ef. The knight has extricated itself from the dangerous corner and swapped itself for Black's active bishop. On the other hand, the black pawn has made it all the way to c2, where it feels reasonably safe and hence gains equal chances for Black. If 20.♖a2 then Cox recommends 20...♗f5 21.♘c7 ♘c6, and after 22.a6 ♔f7! 22.ab ♖b8 the white passed pawn will not survive, unlike Black's.

18.♖a3 has been tested in correspondence games using computers, retaining the two extra pieces for the time being. Black

proved to be absolutely fine in the following tense game: 18...♘e4 19.♘c7 c2 20.♘d2 ♘xd2 21.♗xd2 ♔f7 22.♘e8 ♗e5 23.b5 ♘d4 24.♖e1 ♔f7 25.♖xe5 ♖xe8 26.♖c3 ♗f5 (Del Vecchio – Rain, 2002). Or 19...♘c6 20.♘e8 (20.b5 c2 21.♘d2 ♘xd2 22.♗xd2 ♘d4 23.♖e3 ♔f7 24.♖fe1 e5 is somewhat weaker) 20...♗e5 21.b5 ♔f7 22.bc ♖e8 23.♖a2 ♗d4 24.♖e1 ♘f6 25.♖a4 e5 26.cb ♗xb7 27.♘a3 ♖d8 28.♖c4, ½ - ½ (Strengell – Rain, 2006).

14. ... ♘d7-c5

Here White should meet 14...♘c6 with the roundabout manoeuvre 15.♕b3+ ♔f8 16.♕d5!, and the centralized queen cramps the enemy army. 14...♘f6?! has the drawback of closing the long diagonal. After 15.0-0 ♘a6, the discussion between Wolff and Burgess on the assessment of the position arising after 16.♖e1 ♗f5 17.♘a3 ♕xa8 18.♕xd4 has no practical use. 16.♖a4! ♔f7 17.♖xd4 ♕e8 18.♖e1 ♕c6 19.♘d2 ♘h5?! 20.♘f3 h6 21.♖de4 ♖e8 22.♘e5+ ♗xe5 23.♖xe5 is much more convincing (Balcerak – Leutwyler, Biel 2000) – and even more so after 19.♖d8 ♖xd8 20.♕xd8, leaving Black defenseless.

15. b2-b4 ...

Voitsekhovsky takes a step along an untrodden path. Any assessment in favor of White after 15.cd ♗xd4 16.0-0 needs to be qualified with the comment that it comes in a highly complicated position. Christiansen handed the initiative to Alburt (USA 1990) after 16...e5 17.♗e3 ♘ba6 18.♘c3 ♗f5 19.♖c1?! ♔g7 20.♗xd4 ♕xd4 21.b4 ♘d3 22.♘e2 ♕d7 23.♖c3 ♖xa8 24.g4 ♘b2!, although White hung on with the help of 25.♕b3! ♗d3 26.♖e1 ♕xg4+ 27.♘g3 ♕xb4 28.♖xe5 ♗c4 29.♕xb4 ♘xb4 30.♖e7+ ♔h6 31.♖xb7. It would be better to raise the pressure in the center with 19.♘e2!? ♘e6 20.♗xd4 ed 21.♖e1 and the idea of playing 22.♘g3, or else to follow Gutman's recommendation – 19.♘a4!? ♘e6 20.♖e1 ♕xa8 21.g4! Anyway, 17.♘c3 ♗f5 18.♘b5 is even stronger, combining an attack on the centralized bishop with support for the unfortunate knight on a8.

Cabrilo versus Laketic (Kragujevac 2009) retained the initiative after 16...♘c6 17.♘c3 ♗e6 18.♘b5 ♗b3 19.♕g4 ♗e5 20.♗e3 ♘a6 21.♘xa7! ♕xa8 22.♘xc6 bc 23.♖a3 ♗d5 24.♗d4 ♗xd4 25.♕xd4. The total simplifications in the variation 19... ♗c4!? 20.♘xd4 ♕xd4 21.♕xd4 ♘xd4 22.♗e3 ♗xf1 23.♗xd4 ♘b3 24.♗xh8 ♘xa1 (the minor pieces deserve to have their portrait painted!) 25.♗d4 ♘b3 26.♗xa7 ♗b5 lead to an opposite-colored bishops ending a pawn dawn, and look like a draw.

15. ... ♘c5-e6

16. 0-0 ...

It is probably more accurate to first play 16.♕b3, in order to defend c3. After 16...♘c6 17.0-0

♔f7 18.♗b2 ♗d7 19.♖d1 ♕xa8 20.b5 ♘cd8 21.cd Black manages to liquidate the knight but his position looks questionable.

16. ... d4xc3

17. ♕d1-b3 ♘b8-c6?!

Ayupov should have got more for the condemned pawn. Black would have nothing to complain about after the pretty line 17...c2! 18.♘c3 ♘c6 19.♕xc2 ♗d7 20.♖d1 ♕xa8 21.♖xd7 ♕c8 22.♖d1 ♘xd4 23.♕d3 ♕xc3! 24.♕xc3 ♘e2+ 25.♔f1 ♖xc3 26.♖d7 ♔f7.

18. ♘b1xc3 ♗c8-d7?!

18...♘cd4 19.♕a2 ♘f3+ 20.gf ♗xc3 21.♖b1 ♔g7 is more logical and Black would retain some sort of chances on the kingside. Now, however, White grabs the center and breaks his opponent's resistance.

19. ♖f1-d1 ♘c6-d4

20. ♕b3-d5 ♔g8-f7

21. ♗c1-e3 ♗d7-c6

22. ♕d5-c4 ♕d8-d6?!

Black has a small chance with 22... ♗xg2!? 23.♔xg2 ♕xa8 24.♗xd4 b5+ 25.♕d5 ♕xd5+ 26.♘xd5 ♘xd4, after which converting the exchange into a full point is far from easy. White should change the move order for the captures: 23.♗xd4 ♗xd4 24.♔xg2 b5 25.ab ♕xa8+ 26.f3 ♖c8 27.♖xd4! ♖xd4 28.♖xc4 a6 29.♖d1, and this looks like a win.

23. ♗e3xd4 ♗g7xd4

24. ♘a8-c7! ♗d4xf2+

25. ♔g1xf2 ♕d6xc7

26. ♔f2-g1 ♕c7-e5

27. b4-b5 ♕e5-e3+

28. ♔g1-h1

1-0

So it turns out that if Black follows well-trodden paths (7...de 8.a5 ♘8d7 9.♗xf7+ or 7...a5 8.♘g5 e6 9.f4) then he will find it difficult to meet his objectives, whereas the less popular variations 7...d5, 7...de 8.a5 ♘d5 and 7...a5 8.♘g5 d5 give him chances to equalize. Overall, advancing with 7.a4 has a solid reputation and, compared with other lines in the Alekhine Defense, is carried out at the most appropriate time.

Part 15 4.♘f3 ♗g4

Introduction

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 ♗c8-g4



Pinning the knight is the main line in the Alekhine Defense, and the number of games played in it is about the same as the total number of games in other 4.♘f3 lines put together. It all began with the duel between von Balla and Kostic (Budapest 1921), which, to put it diplomatically, was not noted for solid play by White (5.♗e2 ♘c6 6.e6 fe 7.♘g5 ♗xe2 8.♕xe2 ♘xd4 9.♕e4 c5 10.♘xh7 ♘f6 11.♘xf6+ ef 12.♕g6+ ♔d7, and White has nothing for the pawn). Very soon after, both theoreticians and practitioners started to analyze various subvariations, and today we have a wealth of experience to go on.

Chapter 77. Various replies to 4...♗g4

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 ♗c8-g4
5. ♗f1-c4 ...

No continuation is considered to be a serious alternative to 5.♗e2, but at least developing the bishop to c4 more often than not leads to independent lines. 5.ed nearly always leads to the Exchange System. After 5...ed 6.♗c4 ♕e7+! Houdini suggests 7.♔d2 ♘b6 8.♗b5+ c6 9.♖e1 ♗e6 10.♗d3, followed by vigorously moving the king to f1 – well, let's leave this

fantasy to this soulless monster. After 5...cd 6.♗c4 ♘f6 7.0-0 d5 8.♗d3 we unexpectedly find ourselves transposed into a Caro-Kann (1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.ed cd 4.♗d3 ♘f6 5.♘f3 ♗g4 6.0-0).

The continuation 5.h3 ♗xf3 6.♕xf3 de 7.de is considered via the move order 4...de 5.de ♗g4 6.h3 ♗xf3 7.♕xf3 (Game 65). Retreating the bishop to h5 leaves e6 without defense, but White is incapable of taking advantage of this situation. After 5...♗h5 6.e6?! fe 7.g4 ♗f7 8.♘g5 ♗g8 the spring is ready to ping back, while if 6.g4 ♗g6 7.e6?! fe 8.♘g5 ♘c6! 9.♘xe6 ♕d7 10.♘g5 e5 it has already happened. After 6.c4 ♘b6 7.e6 fe 8.♗e2 ♘c6 9.0-0 Black has the pleasant choice between 9...♗xf3 10.♗xf3 ♘xc4 11.♗xc6+ dc 12.♕a4 ♘b6 13.♕xc6+ ♕d7 and 9...♕d7 with the threat of taking on f3 and winning a pawn. After 6.g4 ♗g6 7.e6 fe 8.♗d3 Bagirov predicts a ton of difficulties for Black, which seems somewhat overstated. For example, 6.g4 ♗g6 7.e6 fe 8.♗d3 ♗xd3 9.♕xd3 ♕d7 10.♘g5 ♘c6 11.♘xh7 ♘xd4! 12.♘xf8 ♘b4! 13.♘xd7 ♘xd3+ 14.cd ♘c2+ 15.♔f1 ♘xa1 16.♘a3 ♔d7, and the position is unclear even taking into account the impending death of the black knight.

For original lines after 5.c4 ♘b6 please refer to Game 90.

5. ... e7-e6

Caution! 5...♘b6?? is refuted by 6.♗xf7+! A dozen or two players have fallen into this trap, although none of them was strong.

6. 0-0 ...

6.h3 ♗xf3 7.♕xf3 de 8.de is reviewed via the move order 4...de 5.de ♗g4 6.h3 ♗xf3 7.♕xf3 e6 8.♗c4, see the comments to Game 65.

6. ... d6xe5

Apart from capturing in the center 6...♘b6!? 7.♗e2 ♘c6 8.ed cd is fine. If 7.♗d3 ♘c6 8.ed then the additional opportunity to play 8...♘xd4!? 9.♗e4 ♗xf3 10.♗xf3 ♘xf3+ 11.♕xf3 cd 11.♕xb7 d5 promises Black somewhat better chances.

7. d4xe5 ♘b8-c6

Black actually has a pleasant choice of ways to besiege the weak pawn on e5. Narciso Dublan versus de la Riva (Spain 1994) preferred 7...c6 8.♗e2 ♗xf3 9.♗xf3 ♘d7 10.♕e2 ♕c7 11.c4 ♘e7 12.♖e1 ♘g6 13.♗h5 ♘dxe5 14.f4 ♗c5+ 15.♔h1 ♘d7 16.f5 0-0-0 17.fe fe (17...♘f6!?) 18.♕xe6+ ♔b8 19.♗g5 ♘f6 20.♗xf6 gf. Giving up his extra pawn, he gained a promising position. White should have changed the structure and strived for equality after 11.♗xd5 cd 12.♗f4 ♖c8 13.c3 ♕c4 14.♕xc4 ♖xc4.

In the game Buchholz – Chetverik (Kiel 2014) White got tempted by the flawed idea of chasing the knight from the center: 7...c6 (note the actual move order was 4.♗c4 de 5.de c6 6.♘f3 ♗g4 7.0-0 e6) 8.♗b3?! ♘d7 9.c4?! ♘e7

(heading from a pretty square to a useful one!) 10.♗g5 h6 11.♗xe7 ♗xe7 12.♖e1 ♕a5 13.♘c3 0-0-0 14.♕e2 ♗xf3 15.♕xf3 (15.gf ♗g5!) 15...♘xe5 16.♕h5 ♗f6 17.♘e4 ♖d7, and the extra pawn was a nice bonus in a good position.

8. ♗c4-b5 ...

The following fragment from Zhang Zhiyuan – Gras (Montreal 2010) demonstrates just how easily White can find himself in a hopeless situation: 8.♖e1 ♘db4 9.♕xd8+? (9.♘bd2 was more prudent) 9... ♖xd8 10.♗b3 ♗xb3 11.a3 ♗d5 12.ab ♗xb3 13.cb ♗b4 14.♘c3 a6 15.♗g5 ♖d3.

8. ... ♕d8-d7

After 8...♘db4 9.♕e2 a6 10.♖d1 ♕c8 11.♗xc6 ♘xc6 12.♗f4 ♗c5 13.c3 0-0 14.♘bd2 ♖d8 15.♘e4 ♗e7 (Caruso – Fioramonti, Geneve 1995) the black queen is passive, although Black's position is overall safe.

9. c2-c4 ♘d5-b4
10. ♕d1-b3 0-0-0
11. ♗c1-g5 ♗f8-e7
12. a2-a3 ...



The game Stankiewicz – Topak (Krakow 2011) continued 12... ♘d3 13.♗xe7 ♕xe7 14.♗xc6 bc 15.♘bd2 ♕c5 16.♕c3, and the white king is clearly defended better than his counterpart. Exchanging queens would have immediately ridden Black of his difficulties – 12...♕d3! 13.♕xd3 ♘xd3 14.♗xc6 f6 15.ef gf 16.♗e3 bc.

Game 90
A.Alekhine – S.Reshevsky
Kemeri 1937

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6

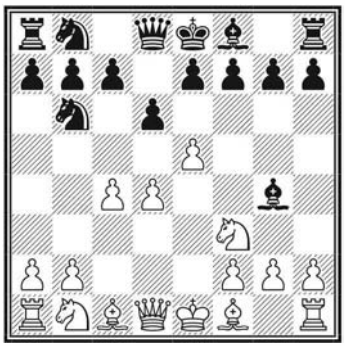
Of the four games that Reshevsky played the Alekhine Defense, three were played at this Baltic resort. Two rounds earlier Sammy defeated Endre Steiner virtually without a struggle, but he clearly anticipated a much tougher game against Alekhine. Obviously, the American had analyzed the 29th game of the Alekhine – Euwe match (see the commentary to White's 7th move) and planned to improve for Black...

2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 ♗c8-g4
5. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6

Diagram

6. ♗f1-e2 ...

This is also how White should play if he doesn't want to exchange the pawns. After 6.♗f4?! de 7.♗xe5 ♘c6 8.♘c3 e6 9.♗e2 ♗xf3 10.♗xf3



♘xe5 11.de c6 or 6.h3 ♗xf3 7.♕xf3 ♘c6 8.♗e3 de 9.de e6 Black has made strategic gains. In the latter case the romantic player Spielmann quickly gave up the pawn but failed to put up serious resistance against Reti (Baden-Baden 1925): 10.a3? ♘d7 11.♗f4 g5 12.♗g3 ♗g7 13.♘c3 ♘dxe5 14.♗xe5 ♗xe5 15.♖d1 ♕f6 16.♕xf6 ♗xf6 17.♘a4 ♔e7 18.♗d3 ♖ad8 19.♗e4 ♖xd1+ 20.♔xd1 ♘a5 21.♗d3 ♖d8 22.♔e2 h6.

Vitolinsh's novelty 6.d5 failed to live up to its hopes. The variation 6...e6 7.ed ♕xd6 8.♘c3 ed 9.cd d6 10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♕xf3 (Vitolinsh – Kengis, Riga 1984) 11...♘xd5 12.♗c4 ♕e7+ 13.♔d1 ♘xc3+ 14.bc ♘d7 15.♖e1 ♘e5 16.♗xf7+ ♕xf7 17.♖xe5+ ♗e7 18.♕xf7+ ♔xf7 leads to an equal endgame. A little later Kengis preferred 10...♗h5 11.g4 ♗g6 against the idea's author, which was evidently more precise. After 6...de 7.h3 ♗xf3 8.♕xf3 White has 'colossal activity' for the sacrificed pawn (Bagirov) although in fact this activity is more modest (8...♘6d7 9.♕b3 ♕c8 10.♗e3 g6 11.c5 ♗g7 12.♘c3 0-0). Finally, in the game Nizamov – Balberov (Tomsk 2001) a third line didn't let Black down: 6... ♘8d7 7.e6 fe 8.h3 ♗xf3 9.♕xf3 ♕c8 (9...ed!? 10.cd g6) 10.♘c3 c6 11.de ♘c5 12.♗e3 ♕xe6 13.0-0-0 ♘cd7 14.♕f4 ♕f7 15.♕h4 ♘e5 16.h3 0-0-0 17.c5 dc 18.♖xd8+ ♔xd8 19.♗xc5 ♕f6 20.♕g3 ♘ed7 21.♕d3 ♔c7 22.♗e3 e6 – the compensation has totally melted away.

6. ... d6xe5

The continuations 6...e6, 6... c6 and 6...♘c6 do not lead to independent lines.

7. ♘f3xe5 ...

Alekhine deviates first from his game against Euwe (Amsterdam 1935), which continued 7.c5!? (obviously targeting b7 after 7... ♘6d7 8.♕b3 while retaining a hidden threat against the same square in the game itself) 7...e4 8.cb ef 9.♗xf3 ♗xf3 10.♕xf3 ab 11.♕xb7 ♘d7 12.♗f4 e5! 13.♗xe5 ♘xe5 14.de ♗b4+ 15.♘c3 ♗xc3+ 16.bc 0-0 17.0-0 ♕e7 18.♖fe1 ♕c5 19.♖e3 ♖a3 20.♕f3 ♖e8. Although Black is a pawn down, his position isn't actually that bad. Bagirov (citing Fine) expresses a preference for the variation 10...♘c6 11.0-0 ♘xd4 12.♕xb7 ab 13.♗e3 ♖b8 14.♕e4 ♘b5!, and ♘b5-d6, while Reshevsky may have noticed a hole in Alekhine's analysis – 11...ab 12.d5(?) ♘d4 (instead of 12...♘e5?! 13.♕e4), and how can you now order the queen to simultaneously

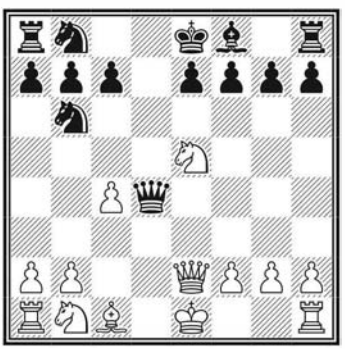
defend b3, c2 and d5?! Bagirov correctly considered Alekhine's recommendation 8.♘g5 (instead of 8.cb) 8...♗xe2 9.♕xe2 ♘d5 10.0-0 ♘c6 11.♖d1 to be good enough only for equality.

7. ... ♗g4xe2

8. ♕d1xe2 ...

8.♔xe2 saves the pawn, but the king is in an uncomfortable position – as in the example To Quoc Khanh – Torre (Ho Chi Minh 2003): 8... ♘8d7 9.♘c3 a6 10.♗e3 ♘xe5 11.de ♕h4 12.f4 ♗e7 13.♕b3 0-0 (13...0-0-0!?) 14.♖ad1 ♖ad8 15.c5 ♕g4+ 16.♔f2 ♔d7 17.h3 ♕g6. Sychev against Losev (Kaluga 2007) immediately led his king to safety but still ended up with a weaker position: 9.b3 e6 10.♘f3 a5 11.♖e1 ♗b4 12.♗d2 0-0 13.♔f1 c5 14.♗xb4 ab 15.♘bd2 ♘f6 16.dc ♘bd7.

8. ... ♕d8xd4



White is a good pawn down, but he plans to win tempi by chasing the black queen, which he hopes will let him develop an initiative. According to Alekhine the best move here is 9.♘a3, in order to avoid exchanges. But this view is debatable: 9...e6 10.♘c2 ♕h4 11.b3 ♗d6 12.♘f3 ♕h5 13.h3 ♘c6 and ♘c6(d7)-e5 nevertheless leads to exchanges, and in a worse position for White.

9. 0-0 ♘b8-d7

10. ♘e5xd7 ♘b6xd7?!

We wonder whether the players knew of the initial game in this line: Thomas – Flohr (Antwerp 1932)? After 10...♕xd7 11.♘c3 e6 12.♗e3 ♗e7 13.♖ad1 ♕c6 14.♕g4 0-0 15.b3 f5 16.♕e2 ♖ae8 17.♘b5 ♘c8 18.f3 ♗c5 19.♕f2 ♗xe3 20.♕xe3 a6 21.♘d4 ♕b6 White has nothing in particular for the pawn. Alekhine planned 11.a4 ♕c6 (11...♘xa4?! 12.♕f3!) 12.♘a3 e6 13.a5 ♘d7 14.♘b5, but Houdini has a concrete refutation – 14...a6 15.♘d4 ♕c5 16.♗e3 ♕e5 17.♘f3 ♕e4 18.♖fd1 ♗d6.

11. ♘b1-c3 c7-c6

12. ♗c1-e3 ♕d4-e5

13. ♖a1-d1 e7-e6

14. ♕e2-f3 0-0-0

As a result of Black's clumsy capture, White's initiative is taking proper shape. In reply to 14... ♗e7 White should continue not with 15.♖xd7?! ♔xd7 16.♕xf7 (Alekhine) 16...♕f6 17.♕h5 ♕f5 18.♕e2 ♖fd8 where Black is the exchange up with a good position, but 15.♘b5! and then only play 16.♖xd7! in response to 15...cb? But here Reshevsky returns material to increase his king's safety.

15. ♗e3xa7 ♕e5-a5

16. ♗a7-d4 ♕a5-f5
17. ♕f3-g3 ...

The choice between retreating and swapping the queen is a matter of taste.

17. ... e6-e5
18. ♗d4-e3 ♗f8-b4
19. ♘c3-a4 ♗b4-a5
20. f2-f4 ♗a5-c7
21. b2-b3 f7-f6

Evidently, 21...♕h5 is more prudent, as on the 23rd move White could pluck up the courage to take the pawn on g7.

22. f4xe5 ♕f5-e6
23. h2-h3 ♖h8-g8
24. ♗e3-d4 ♘d7xe5

Alekhine was right, recommending 24...fe 25.♕e3 e4, but he was wrong to suggest that the move played was the decisive mistake. His refutation is roundly condemned by the computer.

25. ♕g3-c3 ♘e5-d7
26. c4-c5 ♖g8-e8
27. b3-b4?! ♘d7-b8?

After 27...♕xa2 28.♖a1 ♕d5 29.♖fe1 (Alekhine) 29...♖e2 30.♗f2 ♕e5 31.♕f3 ♖d2! 32.♖xd2 ♕xa1+ 33.♕d1 ♕xd1+ 34.♖xd1 ♘e5 Black gets to an endgame with the extra pawn intact thanks to reciprocal threats.

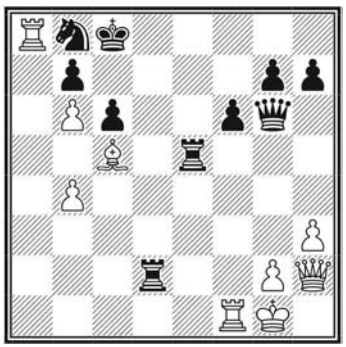
28. ♘a4-b6+ ♗c7xb6
29. c5xb6 ♕e6xa2
30. ♕c3-g3 ♖d8-d7
31. ♗d4-c5?! ...

This is best replaced by a little combination 31.♗xf6! gf 32.♖xd7 ♔xd7 33.♕c7+ ♔e6 34.♖e1+.

31. ... ♕a2-f7
32. ♖d1-a1 ♕f7-g6
33. ♕g3-h2 ♖e8-e5

Reshevsky in the game and Alekhine in his commentary failed to notice that after 33...♘a6 34.b5 cb 35.♖fc1 ♖e2 White doesn't have a good hidden check, as the black pieces are on light squares. After 36.♗f2+ ♖c2 37.♕g3 ♔d8 38.♕b3 ♖xc1+ 39.♖xc1 ♕f7 40.♕xb5 White is still far from victory.

34. ♖a1-a8 ♖d7-d2?



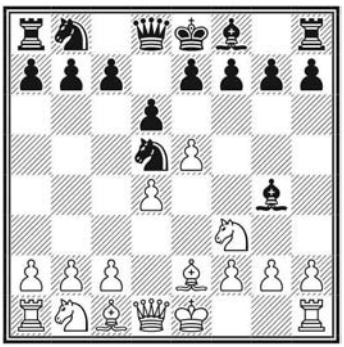
After 34...♕d3 Black can still try to resist, whereas now he is on the receiving end of a pretty finish.

35. ♖a8xb8+! ♔c8xb8
36. ♕h2xe5+!
1-0

All continuations reviewed here at best lead White to other theoretical lines, albeit those that don't give him much anyway. Attempts by White to avoid well-trodden paths here are risky.

Chapter 78. Various replies to 5.♗e2

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**♗f8-g4**
5.	**♗f1-e2**	**...**



The most natural move. A developing one which at the same time removes the pin. Black has a mass of potential moves to choose from, but only three of them are worth focusing on: 5...♘c6 (the main line in the current chapter), 5...c6 (Chapters 79-81) and 5...e6 (Chapters 82-87). Other moves are played relatively rarely and are vulnerable, above all to tactics. For example, the game Piorun – Flak (Koszalin 1997) saw White carry out a standard sacrifice to hold back Black's development: 5...♘b6 6.h3 ♗h5 7.e6! fe 8.♘g5 ♗xe2 9.♕xe2 ♘c6 10.♘xe6 ♕d7 11.0-0 ♘d8 12.♘xf8 ♔xf8 13.♕f3+ (13.♖e1 ♘c6 14.c3 was even stronger) 13...♔g8 14.d5 e6 15.de ♕xe6 16.♘c3 ♕f7 17.♕d3 d5 18.♗e3 c6 19.♖ae1 with an advantage.

In the game V.Riff – Lyrberg (Agneaux 2010) the combination after 5...de 6.♘xe5 ♗xe2 7.♕xe2 ♘d7? 8.♘xf7! ♔xf7 9.♕h5+ g6 10.♕xd5+ e6 11.♕xb7 saw White emerge two pawns up. The Swedish master had foreseen that if Black plays 9...♔e6 10.c4 ♘5f6 11.d5+ ♔d6 12.♕h3 he will have to return the piece with interest to avoid his king being chased into the enemy camp – 12...c6 13.c4 ♘5f6 14.♗f4+ e5 15.de+ ♔e7 16.cd ♕xd7. Given that 7...c6? 8.♕f3 ♘f6 9.♕b3 is no good either, Black is advised to accept doubled pawns with 7...♘c6 8.♘xc6 bc.

In response to 5...g6 White has two good continuations available. After 6.h3 ♗xf3 7.♗xf3 de? he gains a decisive advantage thanks to an intermediate attack: 8.c4 ♘b6 9.♗xb7 ♘bd7 10.♗xa8 ♕xa8 11. 0-0 ♗g7 12.de ♘xe5 13.♘a3 0-0 14.♕e2 ♖d8 15.♗f4 ♘c6 16.♗xc7 ♘xd4 17.♕d3 ♖d7 18.♗xb6 ab 19.♘b5 (Klovans – Ermeni, Biel 2006). In van Riemsdijk – Wobbe (Hamburg 1997) Black counted on defending dryly, but the central breakthrough was just what White's bishops needed – 7...e6 8.ed ♕xd6 9.0-0 ♗g7 10.c4 ♘f6 11.♕b3 ♕c7 12.♗e3 0-0 13.♘c3 e6 14.♖ac1

♘bd7 15.d5 ♖fe8 16.♖fd1 ♗f8 17.dc bc 18.♕a4 ♖ec8 19.b4.

After 6.♘g5 ♗xe2 (6...♗f5 7.e6! ♗xe6 8.♘xe6 fe 9.♗g4) 7.♕xe2 we again see 'minor' tactics. In the miniature Varnusz – Ponyi (Salgotarjan 1978) the strong point c7 unexpectedly caved in – 7...de? 8.♕f3 f6 9.♘e6 ♕d6 10.♕xd5! Black would have been better following the game Mrdja – Joguet (Le Touquet 2001): 7...e6 8.c4 ♘b6 9.♕f3 ♕d7 10.♘e4 (10.♕xb7?! ♕c6 is weaker: 11.♕xc6 ♘xc6 and Black wins back the pawn with a better position) 10...♗e7 11.ed cd 12.♘f6+ ♗xf6 13.♕xf6 ♖g8 14.♕h4 f5, and apart from his weakened dark squares Black has no drawbacks in his position.

5. ... ♘b8-c6

Bagirov calls this line the 'Lithuanian Variation' in view of the efforts of Vladas Mikenas and other Lithuanian players. We are fine with this name, although the idea of pressure on the center with the knight had been played by strong chess players long before Mikenas.

6. 0-0 ...

The old game von Balla – Kostic cited in the introduction to Chapter 15 failed to popularize the sacrifice 6.e6. Despite the statistics in favor of White the pawn advance here isn't in fashion. After 6...fe (6...♗e6? 7.c4 and 8.d5 costs Black a piece) 7.♘g5 ♗xe2 8.♕xe2 ♘xd4 9.♕d1 h6 10.♘xe6 ♘xe6 11.♕xd5 ♕c8 12.♕h5+ ♔d7 13.0-0 c6 14.f4 ♔c7 15.♗e3 ♕e8 16.♕g4 ♕f7 17.f5 ♘d8 18.♘c3 b6 19.b4 ♖c8 20.a4 (Pap – Mrkonjic, Pula 2003) the king isn't left in peace on the queenside, although the players missed a trick with 15...g5! 16.fg (or 16.f5) 16...♗g7!

After 6.ed ed 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.c4 ♘b6 one of the tabiyas of the Exchange System arises. Whereas if the c-pawn is restricted to advancing by a modest single square then the d4 pawn is fully safe and a barrier has been built on the long diagonal to counter the bishop. That said, after 8.c3 0-0 9.♕b3 ♘b6 10.♖e1 ♖e8 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♗xf3 d5, or 6... cd 7.0-0 g6 8.h3 ♗xf3 9.♗xf3 ♘f6 10.♖e1 ♗g7 11.c3 d5, the advantage of the bishop pair fails to count in this relatively closed position.

The chapters on the Exchange System analyze the continuations 6.c4 ♘b6 7.ed ed and 7...cd. We repeat that pushing the pawn with 8.d5 is relatively harmless in the former case but leads to an advantage for White in the latter.

6. ... e7-e6

If Black wants to immediately bring his king's bishop into play then the fianchetto isn't appropriate. After 6...g6? 7.e6! ♗xf3 (7...fe 8.♘g5 ♗xe2 9.♕xe2 ♘xd4 10.♕d3 threatening c2-c3) 8.ef+ ♔xf7 9.♗xf3 ♘f6 10.c3 d5 11.♗g5 ♖b8 12.♖e1 ♕d6 13.♘a3 b5 14.♕d2 Black's position is seriously compromised (Rimawi – Osman, Damascus 2003).

The 6...♘b6 retreat has led on several occasions to endgames similar to that in Munguntuul – Prokopchuk (Moscow 2012): 7.h3 ♗xf3 (7...♗h5 8.e6! fe 9.♖e1 ♕d7 10.a4 a5 11.♗b5 is clearly better for White) 8.♗xf3 de 9.♗xc6+ bc 10.de ♕xd1 11.♖xd1 e6 12.b3 ♘d7 13.♗b2 0-0-0 14.♘d2 ♗e7 15.♘c4 ♘b8 16.♔f1 ♖d5 17.♘e3 ♖d7 18.♔e2 ♖hd8 19.f4 ♗c5 20.♘c4 ♖d5 21.♘d2 ♘a6 22.♘e4 ♗e7 23.c4 ♖5d7 24.♖xd7 ♖xd7 25.♖d1 ♖xd1 26.♔xd1 – unattractive, but defensible. White is entitled to fight for the initiative in the middlegame: 7.ed ed 8.a4 a5 (8...a6 9.♘g5!? ♗xe2 10.♕xe2+ ♕e7 11.♕d1!) 9.d5 ♗xf3 10.♗xf3 ♘e5 11.♗e2 ♗e7 12.♗e3 ♘ed7 (Ostojic – Marovic, Wijk aan Zee 1968) 13.♗xb6 ♘xb6 14.♗b5+ ♘d7 15.♕g4 g6 16.♖a3.

After 6...de 7.de the aggression against c2 is easily countered: 7...♘db4 8.♗d2 ♗f5 9.♗xb4 ♕xd1 10.♖xd1 ♘b4 11.♘a3 c6 12.c3 ♘d5 13.♘b5 a6 14.c4! cd 15.cb with an advantage in development. Therefore, Black should focus on his development: 7...e6 8.♖e1 ♗e7 9.h3 ♗h5 10.♘bd2 0-0 11.♘f1 ♕e8 12.♘g3 ♗g6 13.♗d3 ♖d8 14.♕e2 ♗b4 15.♖d1 ♘b6 16.♘e4 ♗e7 17.♗g5 ♗xg5 18.♘exg5 h6 19.♗xg6 ♖xd1+ 20.♖xd1 fg 21.♘e4 ♘d5 (Al.Kharitonov – Kravtsov, Arkhangelsk 1996). Even capturing away from the center is good for Black and chances are about equal.

The strongest continuation, 7.♘xe5, involves a temporary pawn sacrifice – 7...♗xe2 8.♕xe2 ♘xd4 9.♕c4. Black should return it not via 9...c5?! 10.♗e3 ♘c6 11.♘xc6 bc 12.♗xc5, but in the spirit of the game Stevic – Narciso Dublan (Rijeka 2010): 9...f6 10.♕xd4 fe 11.♕xe5 ♕d6 12.♕e2 0-0-0 13.c4 ♘b4 14.♘c3 ♕g6 15.♗e3 ♘c6 16.♖ad1 ♖xd1 17.♖xd1 e6 18.♘b5 a6 19.♘d4 ♘xd4 20.♗xd4 ♗e7 – the weak pawn doesn't play a significant role. In the variations 7...♘xe5 8.de ♗xe2 9.♕xe2 ♕d7 10.c4 ♘b4 11.♖d1 ♕f5 12.♘c3 ♘c6 13.♘b5 ♖c8 14.♗e3 a6 15.♘a7 ♘xa7 16.♗xa7 and 8...♗f5 9.c4 ♘b6 10.♕b3 e6 (10...♕xd4?! 11.♗e3 ♕xe5 12.♖d1 ♖b8 13.♘a3 c6 14.♘b5! cb 15.♗xb6 ab 16.♖d5, and the material is won back with interest) 11.♖d1 ♕c8 12.♕g3 ♗c2 13.♖d4 ♗g6 14.h4 c5 15.♖d1 ♗c2 16.♖e1 ♗xb1 17.♖xb1 ♕c7 18.♖d1 (Korneev – Panchenko, Spain 1996) White has an advantage in development.

7. c2-c4 ...

In reply to 7.ed Black has not only 7...cd 8.c4 ♘b6 available (transposing to Game 7 of the history section) but also the acceptable 7...♗xd6 8.c4 ♘f6 9.♗e3 0-0 10.♘c3 ♖e8 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♗xf3 ♕d7.

7. ... ♘d5-e7

The knight is looking hard for some good squares, but at the same time it is holding back Black's kingside mobilization. 7...♘b6 8.ed cd again takes us to Game 7. The strange pawn sacrifice 8.♘c3 de 9.d5

has been played several times. As a result, White cannot even open up the game: 9...ed 10.cd ♗xf3 11.♗xf3 ♘d4 12.♖e1 ♘xf3+ 13.♕xf3 ♗d6 14.♗f4 ♘d7 15.♕g4 g6 16.♗h6 f5 17.♕h3 (Bokelbrink – Kopylov, Germany 2000) 17...♘f6 18.♖ac1 ♔f7.

8. e5xd6 ...

8.♕a4 ♕d7 9.ed cd 10.♖d1 d5 11.♘c3 dc 12.d5 ♘xd5 13.♘xd5 cd 14.♗xc4 ♗e6 15.♗f4 a6 16.♖ac1 led to a complicated position with compensation for the pawn (Kopaev – Mikenas, Vilnius 1999). 12.♕xc4 ♖c8 13.h3 ♗xf3 14.♗xf3 ♘e5 15.♕e2 ♘xf3+ 16.♕xf3 ♘f5 17.d5 is a slightly better way for White to advance in the center.

8. ... ♕d8xd6

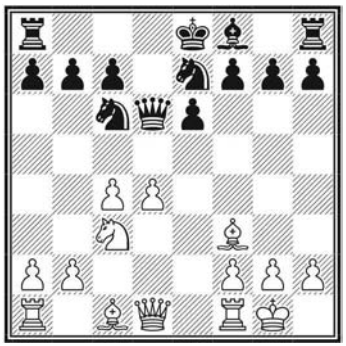
9. ♘b1-c3 ...

Vladimir Bagirov got a good position against Raab (Muenster 1994) after 9.♗e3 ♘f5 10.♘c3 ♘xe3 11.fe ♗e7 12.♘e4 ♕d7 13.a3 f5 14.♘c3 ♗f6 15.g3 0-0 16.♕e1 ♕e8 17.♖d1 ♖d8. At the same time, 12.c5 ♕d7 13.♕a4 and ♗e2-b5 exercise a nasty influence along the a4-e8 diagonal.

9. ... ♗g4xf3

10. ♗e2xf3 ...

Diagram

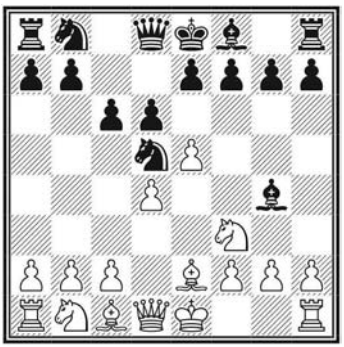


Bagirov defended the arising position against the computer Vancouver (Neu Isenburg 1992) back in those innocent times when the 'iron monsters' were still allowed to participate in 'human' opens. After 10...♕xd4 11.♕xd4 ♘xd4 12.♗xb7 ♖b8 13.♗e4 f5 14.♗d3 a6 15.♖e1 ♔f7 16.b3 ♘ec6 Black strengthened his knight with a good position. However, after 11.♘b5!? ♕xd1 12.♖xd1 ♖c8 13.♗f4 ♘g6 14.♗xc7 a6 15.♘d6+ ♗xd6 16.♗xc6+ bc 17.♗xd6 it's not easy to hold the endgame. Given that castling long would expose Black to a direct attack (10...0-0-0 11.♘b5 ♕d7 12.♗f4 a6 13.♗xc7 ab 14.♗xd8 ♘xd8 15.♖c1), while after 10...♘xd4 11.♗xb7 ♖d8 12.♕a4+ c6 13.♗e3 ♕c7 14.♕xa7 e5 15.♖fe1 f6 (De Firmian – Shamkovich, USA 1994) 16.♗xd4 ♖xd4 (16...ed 17.♘e4) 17.♖ad1 ♔f7 18.♖xd4 ed 19.♘e4 he cannot complete his development, the position in the diagram is without doubt better for White.

So it seems that moving the knight to c6 early has more cons than pros. The knight most often gets chased away, pinned or exchanged before it has the chance to cause White any harm.

Chapter 79. 5... c6. Various 6th moves

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**♗c8-g4**
5.	**♗f1-e2**	**c7-c6**



Black defends the b7 square in the event of a planned exchange on f3, and plans after the exchange on e5 to siege the advanced pawn with all available forces. It is only right that this system is named after Grandmaster Salo Flohr. His first experience in this line, gained against Botvinnik in Moscow (1936), wasn't very successful. However, a little later in Nottingham Flohr gained a much better result against the future world champion.

6. c2-c4 ...

The 6.♘g5 sortie is the subject of Chapter 80, while 6.0-0 is the subject of Chapter 81 and the exchange 6.ed is analyzed in Game 91. White wastes a tempo with 6.h3?! surprisingly often – even though ♗g4xf3 is part of Black's plan in any event. The variation 6...♗xf3 7.♗xf3 de 8.de e6 9.0-0 ♘d7 10.♕e2 ♕c7 11.♖e1 ♗c5 12.♘d2 0-0 13.♘b3 ♗b6 14.♗g5 h6 15.♗d2 a5 16.a4 ♘e7 17.♖ad1 ♘g6 18.♗c3 (Kalod – V.Sergeev, Czech Republic 2011) demonstrates how the white pieces get tied down to defending the e5 pawn. But at the same time, Black finds it hard to make real gains due to his lack of space. The black knight's journey to the edge of the board in the game Negi – Z.Varga (Mumbai 2010) slightly livened up play, but it was really White who benefited: 9...♕c7 10.♖e1 ♘d7 11.♕e2 ♘e7 12.♗f4 ♘g6 13.♗g3 ♖d8 14.♘d2 ♗e7 15.♖ad1 0-0 16.♕e4 ♘c5 17.♕e3 ♘a4 18.♘c4 b5 19.♖xd8 ♖xd8 20.♘d6 ♘xb2 21.♕c3 ♘a4 22.♕xc6 ♕xc6 23.♗xc6 a6 24.c4 ♘xe5 (this would have been more accurate on the previous move) 25.♗xe5 ♗xd6 26.♖d1 ♗c7 27.♖xd8+ ♗xd8 28.cb ab 29.♗xb5 ♘c5. The Hungarian eventually achieved a draw after a super-human effort.

6. ... ♘d5-b6

Although theoreticians have rejected 6...♗xf3 7.♗xf3 this line isn't that clear. Retreating 7...♘c7?! allows an attack on b7, whereas defending the Achilles heel involves problems with Black's king: 8.♕b3 ♕c8 9.ed ed 10.0-0 ♗e7 11.♖e1

♔f8 12.♘c3 h5 13.d5 c5 14.♗f4 ♘d7 15.♖xe7! ♔xe7 16.♖e1+ ♔f8 17.♗xd6+ ♔g8 18.♗f4 ♘e8 19.d6 ♖b8 20.♘d5 ♕d8 21.♖e7 with a win (Kudrin – Karagiannis, Chania 1995). At the same time it's unclear whether the extra piece outweighs the three pawns in the line 7...♘b6 8.♕b3 de 9.c5 ed 10.cb ab 11.0-0 e6. Bologan played very aggressively against M.Hansen (Warsaw 2011), but after 8.e6 fe 9.♕e2 g6 10.♕xe6 ♗g7 11.c5?! dc 12.dc ♘6d7 13.0-0 ♘a6 14.♖d1 ♘axc5 15.♕c4 ♕b6 16.♗e2 0-0-0 17.♕c2 ♘e6 he had nothing for the sacrificed pawn. Evidently, he should have made do with crumbs of an advantage after 11.♗e3 ♕d7 12.♕xd7+ ♘8xd7 13.♘d2.

In response to 6...♘c7 White can sacrifice a pawn with 7.♘bd2 de 8.♘xe5 ♗xe2 9.♕xe2 ♕xd4, which is similar to the main line of this chapter. White has the initiative, and certainly not just an abstract one: 10.♘df3 ♕c5 (10...♕b6 11.♘g5 f6 12.♕g4! e6 13.♕h5+ g6 14.♘xg6 hg 15.♕xh8 fg 16.0-0) 11.♘g5 f6 (Wyss – Karrer, Zuerich 2006) 12.♘ef7 fg 13.♘xh8 g6 14.h4 ♗g7 15.h5.

White usually goes for 7.ed. The English master Crouch has played 7...♕xd6 with success, although objectively this capture doesn't lead to equality: 8.♘c3 ♗xf3 9.♗xf3 e5 10.d5!? cd 11.♘xd5 10.de ♕xe5+ 11.♗e3 ♗c5 12.0-0 0-0 13.♗xc5 ♕xc5 (Gilbert – Crouch, England 2003) 14.♕b3 ♕b6 15.♖fd1 ♘e6 16.♘e4. After 7...ed the games usually see 'Indian' structures without any counterplay for Black. That said, White gained little in the game Poetsch – Z.Varga (Budapest 2010) after 8.♘c3 ♗e7 9.h3 ♗h5 10.0-0 0-0 11.♕b3 b6 12.♗f4 ♘d7 13.♖ad1 ♘f6 14.d5 c5 15.♖fe1 ♖e8 16.♘d2 ♗g6 17.♗f3 ♕d7 due to the clumsy position of his queen on b3. Kanovsky versus Ganor (Pardubice 2010) quickly gained a crushing advantage in a different structure – 12.♗e3 ♘d7 13.♕a4 c5 14.♖fd1 ♕c8 15.♖d2 ♘f6 16.dc dc 17.♖ad1 ♖d8 18.♖xd8+ ♗xd8 19.g4 ♗g6 20.♘e5. 15...♖e8 is stronger, and, in reply to the exchange 16.dc, 16...bc and 16...♘xc5 are equally acceptable.

7. ♘b1-d2 ...

Bagirov associates the pawn sacrifice with Levenfish and cites his analyses. However, in practice Grandmaster Lothar Vogt was the inventor of this line. The exchange 7.ed is found in Game 92.

Krizsany and Videki believe the sortie 7.♘g5 to be the only move deserving consideration, and the retreat 7...♗f5 to be an error in view of 8.e6 fe(?) 9.g4. Black can, however, maintain approximate equality in the variation 8...♗xe6 9.♘xe6 fe 10.♕b3 ♕c7 11.♕h3 g6 12.♕xe6 ♗g7 13.♗e3 ♕d7 14.♕xd7+ ♘8xd7.

7. ... d6xe5

After 7...♘8d7 the unusual

exchange operation 8.♘g5 ♗xe2 9.e6 f6 10.♕xe2 fg 11.ed+ ♕xd7 has been tried. Play could continue 12.♘e4 ♘xc4!? 13.♘xg5 ♘b6 14.0-0 ♕f5 15.♘e6 ♔d7 16.♖e1 ♘d5 (Orak – Kovacevic, Pula 1993) – the knight has established itself in the center and is ready to exchange itself for an opponent from the c7 square at the right time.

In seeking an advantage White most often castles here. After 8.0-0 de 9.♘xe5 ♗xe2 10.♕xe2 e6 11.♘xd7 ♕xd7 12.♘f3 ♗e7 13.♖d1 the other knight heads for e5 and Black's position is uncomfortable. On the other hand, 9...♘xe5 10.de ♗f5 gradually equalizes chances, such as in the example Greet – Baburin (England 2006): 11.♕b3 e6 12.♖d1 ♕c7 13.♕g3 0-0-0 14.b3 h5 15.♘f1 ♖xd1+ 16.♗xd1 h4 17.♕e3 h3 18.g4 ♗g6.

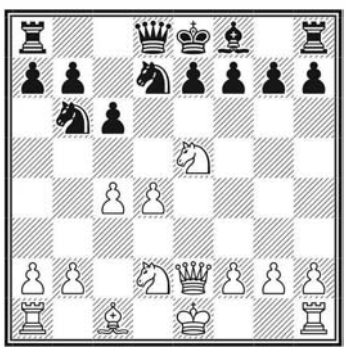
8. ♘f3xe5 ...

If 8.de?! ♗xf3 9.♗xf3 e6 10.0-0 ♕c7 11.♖e1 ♘8d7 12.♕e2 ♖d8 then Black is ready to invade with ♘d7-c5-d3 and has the better position.

8. ... ♗g4xe2

Black often plays 8...♗f5 here, as this makes the bishop much more active than its counterpart. After 9.♘ef3 e6 10.0-0 ♗e7 11.♕b3 in the game Mahdy – V.Sergeev (Oberwart 2010) Black could have sat things out on three ranks (with 11...♕c7), but instead decided to gain a bit of freedom: 11...c5 12.♕e3 ♘8d7 13.♘b3 cd 14.♘bxd4 ♗g6 15.b3 0-0 16.♗b2 a6 17.♖ad1 ♕c7 18.♗d3 ♗xd3 19.♖xd3 ♘c5 20.♖d2 ♗f6 21.♖fd1 ♖fd8 with prospects of equalizing after exchanges along the open file. Pavlov didn't take any action against Vysochin (Kiev 2009): 9.♘df3 ♘8d7 10.0-0 ♘xe5 11.♘xe5 e6 12.♗e3 ♘d7 13.♘xd7 ♕xd7 14.♕b3 (d4-d5 here or later would not promise White any advantage) 14...♗e7 15.♖fd1 0-0 16.♗f3 ♗d6 17.♖ac1 ♖fd8 18.g3 ♖ac8 19.c5 ♗b8 20.♕c4 ♕e7 with an extremely strong position. Andrei Sokolov was probably correct (in his game with Zelcic, Torcy 1991), on insisting on exchanging the light-squared bishops with 12.♗g4!? ♗xg4 13.♕xg4. In response to 12... ♗g6 13.c5 ♘d5 Black finds himself stuck for moves after the unexpected 14.♕b3! ♕c8 15.♕h3! 13...♘d7 14.♗f4 is not good for Black either.

9. ♕d1xe2 ♘b8-d7



If 9...♕xd4?! 10.♘df3 ♕c5 11.♗d2 ♘6d7 12.0-0 (Vogt – Vukic, Zinnowitz 1969) 12...f6 13.♗e3

♕a5 14.♘xd7 ♘xd7 15.♘d4 Black will have to give up at least a pawn to complete development. In recent times such a risky venture has not been seen.

10. 0-0 ...

German master Ansgar Barthel has defended the position on the board but without visible success. That said, the variation itself wasn't to blame. For example, after 10.♘ef3 e6 11.0-0 ♗e7 12.b3 0-0 13.♗b2 ♕c7 14.♖ac1 ♖fe8 15.♖fe1 ♖ad8 Vogt (Rogaska Slatina 2011) failed to gain any advantage, and only won due to the subsequent mistakes by his opponent.

10. ... ♘d7xe5
11. d4xe5 e7-e6
12. ♘d2-f3 ...

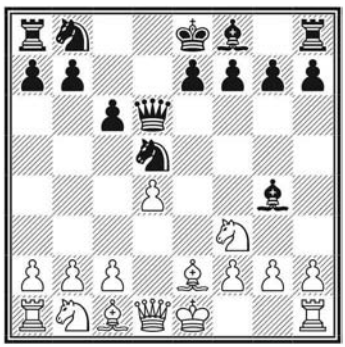
Once again, chasing the central pawn is like playing with fire: 12.b3 ♕d4 13.♖b1 ♖d8 (13...0-0-0!?) 14.♘e4 ♕xe5?! 15.♗b2 ♕a5 16.♖bd1. It's more sensible to try and exchange queens with 14... ♕d3.

12. ... ♗f8-e7
13. ♖f1-d1 ♕d8-c7

Barthel has played this position twice. The attack on the king carried out by Baumegger (Vienna 2013) led to nothing: 14.♖d4 0-0 15.♖g4 ♔h8 16.♗g5 ♗xg5 17.♘xg5 h6 18.♖h4 ♕e7 19.♘f3 ♖ad8. Varitski (Pardubice 2012) stuck his rooks on the open file and retained his slightly better position: 14.♗g5 0-0 15.♗xe7 ♕xe7 16.♖d6 ♖ad8 17.♖ad1 ♘c8 18.♖6d3.

Game 91
I.Rozum – S.Pavlov
Kiev 2013

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 ♗c8-g4
5. ♗f1-e2 c7-c6
6. e5xd6 ♕d8xd6



This is seen relatively rarely. After the usual capture with 6...ed Black is slightly cramped, but with a solid position. Even Kasparov failed to gain any significant advantage in a simul against Morales (Sao Paulo 2004): 7.c4 ♘f6 8.0-0 be7 9.♘c3 0-0 10.d5 c5 11.h3 ♗h5 12.g4 ♗g6 13.♘h4 ♘e8 14.♘xg6 hg (14...fg!?) 15.♗e3 ♘d7 16.♕d2. If White declines to move his pawn to d5, then Black will probably move his d-pawn to that square instead: 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.h3 ♗f5 9.c4 ♘f6 10.♘h4 ♗e6 11.♗d3 d5 12.♕b3 dc 13.♗xc4 ♗xc4 14.♕xc4 0-0 15.♘f5 ♘d5 16.♘c3 ♗f6

17.♖e1 ♕d7 18.♕d3 ♘a6 19.♕f3 (V.Onischuk – Pavlov, Kiev 2006) – and White has almost no advantage. Generally speaking this leads to a quiet position, although the computer might have some fun – 12.♗f5!? ♘e4 13.cd cd 14.♗xe6 ♗xh4 15.♕h5 0-0 16.♗xd5 g6 17.♕e5 ♖e8 18.♗xe4 ♖xe5 19.de with sufficient compensation for the queen.

7. ♘f3-e5 ...

If 7.0-0 then 7...♘f4!? 8.♗xf4 ♕xf4 9.♘e5 ♗xe2 10.♕xe2 e6 and ♗f8-d6 is an interesting line, where Black looks like he is equalizing. But in the game itself Black lacks this opportunity.

7. ... ♗g4xe2
8. ♕d1xe2 ♘b8-d7
9. 0-0 ♘d7xe5

If 9...e6 10.♘d2 it's useful for Black to revert to capturing on e5 in order to avoid the knight being strengthened by ♘d2-f3. After 10...♘xe5 11.de ♕c7 12.♘f3 ♗e7 13.c4 ♘b6 14.b3 ♘d7 15.♗b2 (Trhal – Kastner, Czech Republic 2009) Black can gain even chances by castling short and then fighting over the d-file, rather than playing the debatable g7-g5-g4 march.

10. d4xe5 ♕d6-g6
11. ♖f1-d1 ...

After 11.♘c3 0-0-0 12.♖d1 e6 13.♘e4 ♗e7 (Nestorovic – Pavlov, Serbia 2010) 14.♘d6+ ♔b8 15.c4 ♗xd6 16.ed ♘f6 17.♗e3 only White can create threats once the players have castled on opposite sides. It's possible that the Ukrainian master planned to continue 11...♘xc3 12.bc e6 13.♖b1 0-0-0 – here the pressure isn't overly dangerous. Rozum deviates from previous games first.

11. ... e7-e6
12. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
13. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-e7
14. ♘c3-e4 0-0
15. b2-b3 ♖a8-d8
16. ♘e4-d6 ♗e7xd6
17. e5xd6 e6-e5?!

Up to now the battle has been waged quite logically (and pretty much dictated by White). Instead of 17...♘d7 Pavlov plays an overly risky move, as 18.♕xe5 ♖fe8 19.♕a5 ♖xd6 20.♗e3 would have ensured that White emerges a good pawn ahead.

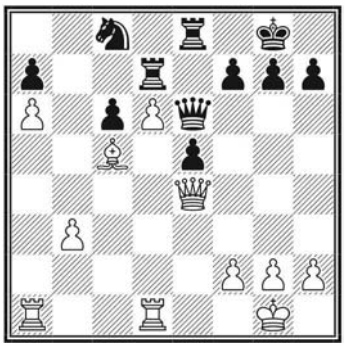
18. ♗c1-e3?! ♖f8-e8
19. a2-a4 ♖d8-d7

It was worth considering 19...♖e6 20.a5 ♘d7, in order to compensate for the loss of the a-pawn by winning the d-pawn.

20. a4-a5 ♘b6-c8
21. a5-a6 b7-b6
22. c4-c5 b6xc5
23. ♗e3xc5 ♕g6-e6

Strange as it may seem, Black can capture the d6 pawn and put up with the dead pin along the file. White doesn't seem to have any obvious win after that.

24. ♕e2-e4 ...



24. ... ♕e6xb3??

Now, however, Rozum finishes off the game in a few moves. The blunder is even less excusable given that in playing 24...♘xd6 25.♕xc6 ♖ed8 26.♖d2 ♘b5 27.♕xe6 fe 28.♖xd7 ♖xd7 Black draws easily in the endgame.

25.	**♖a1-b1**	**♕b3-e6**
26.	**♕e4xc6**	**g7-g6**
27.	**♖b1-b7**	**♖d7-d8**
28.	**♕c6-c7**	**♘c8-e7**
29.	**d6-d7**	**♖e8-f8**
30.	**♕c7-d6**	**♕e6-g4**
31.	**♖d1-f1**	**♘e7-f5**
32.	**♕d6xe5**	

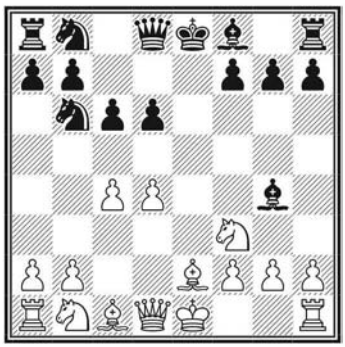
1-0

Game 92

Z.Varga – E.Rozentalis

Austria 2011

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**♗c8-g4**
5.	**♗f1-e2**	**c7-c6**
6.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
7.	**e5xd6**	**e7xd6**



This is a modification of the Exchange System with a pawn on c6 instead of the usual knight. It's easier for Black to resist White's pawn attack, but he doesn't have any real counterplay.

7...♗xf3 8.♗xf3 ♘xc4 hasn't gained popularity. After 9.de ♗xe7 10.0-0 0-0 11.♘c3 ♗f6 12.d5 ♕a5 13.♕b3 ♘b6 14.♗d2 ♗xc3 15.♗xc3 ♕a4 16.♕xa4 ♘xa4 (Tzermiadianos – Karagiannis, Greece 1997) 17.♖fe1 cd 18.♖e7 Black faces a difficult ending. The pawn advance d4-d5 together with the bishop pair is promising for White after 9...♕xe7+ 10.♔f1 g6 11.♕c2 ♘b6 12.d5 ♕c5 13.♘c3, and also after 10...♘d6 11.♘c3 ♕f6 12.h4 h6 13.♕a4 ♘d7 14.d5 ♘b6 15.♕g4 c5 16.♗f4 ♘bc4 17.♗e2 ♗e7 18.♗xc4 ♘xc4 19.♖e1 0-0 20.♗xh6 ♕xh6 21.♕xc4, where White is a pawn up (Kruppa – V.Sergeev, Kiev 1995).

8.	**0-0**	**♗f8-e7**
9.	**♕d1-b3**	**...**

White simultaneously defends the pawn on c4 and takes a greedy look at the b7 pawn. The continuation 9.♕c2 0-0 10.♗e3 fails to gain any advantage in view of 10... ♗xf3 11.♗xf3 ♗g5 12.♗xg5 ♕xg5 13.♘d2 ♘8d7. After 9.♘bd2 0-0 10.♖e1 ♘8d7 11.a4 a5 12.♖a3 ♖e8 13.♖e3 ♘f8 14.♗f1 ♘e6 15.♕c2 ♕d7 16.h3 ♗xf3 17.♘xf3 ♗f6 18.♗b2 d5 19.c5 ♘c8 20.g3 ♘e7 21.h4 ♘g6 22.♗h3 ♘gf6 in the game Timoshenko – Baklan (Kiev 1995) the elegant manoeuvre of the queen's rook failed to prevent Black from setting up his pieces nicely and gaining slight pressure on d4. 14.h3 ♗h5 (14...♗xf3 15.♗xf3 activates the light-squared bishop) 15.♗d3 ♘e6?! 16.♕c2 ♗g6 17.♗xg6 hg 18.♖xe6! fe 19.♕xg6 was more precise.

White usually plays 9.b3, and the standard plan with d6-d5 leads to a fairly uninteresting struggle with blocked pawn chains and equal chances: 9...0-0 10.♗f4 d5 11.c5 ♘6d7 12.♘bd2 a5 13.♗d3 ♘a6 14.♕b1 g6 15.a3 ♘c7 16.h3 ♗xf3 17.♘xf3 ♘e6 18.♗e3 ♗f6 19.b4 ab 20.ab b5 21.♕b2 ♕c7 (Hungaski – V.Sergeev, Amsterdam 2012). Speelman as Black gradually outplayed Tscharotschkin (Gibraltar 2006) after 10.♗b2 d5 11.c5 ♘6d7 12.h3 ♗xf3 13.♗xf3 ♘a6 14.♖e1 ♗f6 15.♗c3 ♘c7 16.♗g4 ♘b5 17.♗xd7 ♕xd7 18.♕d3 (this is stronger without exchanging the passive knight) 18...♖fe8 19.♘d2 g6 20.a4 ♘xc3 21.♕xc3 ♕f5 22.b4 ♕f4 23.♘f3 ♖e4 24.♖xe4 de 25.♘d2 ♖d8 26.♘b3 ♕g5.

9. ... 0-0

10. ♘b1-c3 ...

Following White's queen sortie it makes sense for Black to advance his rook pawn faced with various white setups. For example, 10.♗f4 a5 11.♘bd2 a4 12.♕c2 ♗h5 13.♗d3 ♗g6 14.♖fe1 ♖e8 15.a3 ♘8d7 16.♖e2 ♗f8 17.♖xe8 ♕xe8 18.♖e1 ♕d8 19.♗g5 ♘f6 20.♘h4 ♘bd7 21.♘xg6 hg 22.♘e4 ♕a5 23.♗d2 ♕a7 24.♗c3 ♘xe4 25.♗xe4 ♖e8 (P.Carlsson – Logdahl, Sweden 2007) – the white bishops are clearly lacking in fire power. In response to 10.a4 the black knight will head for b4 – 10...a5 11.♗e3 ♘a6 12.♘c3 ♖e8 13.♖fd1 ♘b4 14.♘a2 d5 15.c5 ♘xa2 16.♖xa2 ♘c4 17.♕xb7 ♖b8 (17...♘xe3 18.fe ♗f6 is even better) 18.♕xc6 ♘xe3 19.fe ♗f6 20.♕d6 ♕xd6 21.cd ♖xe3 22.♗b5 ♖d8 23.♔f2 ♖b3 with a good position (Przybylski – V.Sergeev, Cappelle-la-Grande 2008).

10. ... a7-a5

11. a2-a3 ...

He blocks the pawn and frees up a square for his queen, albeit no better than the current one. We have to admit that Zoltan Varga has not found a decent way to challenge his favorite defense. The exchange of pawns in the game Aghayev – V.Sergeev (Italy 2014) wasn't great for White either: 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♗xf3 a4 13.♕c2 ♘xc4 14.♘xc4

d5 15.b3 ♘a3 16.♕d3 ♘a6 17.♗b2 ♘b5 18.a3 ♗f6 19.♕d2 ♖e8, and Black soon forced peace from a position of strength.

11. ... a5-a4
12. ♕b3-a2 ♖f8-e8
13. ♖f1-e1 ♘b8-d7
14. ♗c1-f4 h7-h6

The queen looks especially clumsy after 14...♗f6 15.♗xd6 ♗xf3 16.♗xf3 ♗xd4. Rozentalis prefers to play with a large margin of safety.

15. ♖a1-d1 ♗e7-f8
17. ♗c1-e3 ♗c8-f5
18. ♖a1-c1 ...

The Hungarian Grandmaster prevents the bishop from invading on c2. After 18.d5 ♗c2 19.♖d4 ♕d8 20.♖g4 ♘f6 21.♖g3 ♘h5 it is logical to repeat moves.

18. ... g7-g5
19. b2-b4 a4xb3
20. ♕d1xb3 d6-d5
21. c4xd5 ...

Now the passive bishop gets to take part in the action on equal terms with its comrades. Varga could have counted on an advantage after 21.c5 ♘c8 22.♕xb7 ♖xa3 23.♕b2 ♖a7 24.♖a1 ♖xa1 25.♖xa1.

21. ... ♖a8xa3
22. ♕b3-b2 c6xd5
23. ♘f3-e5 ♗f8-d6

Black needs to deal with the attacks ♗e2-h5 (aiming at f7) and ♘c3-b5 (with the idea of the rook or knight invading on c7). For this reason, Houdini recommends 23... ♕d8, covering c7 in good time.

24. ♘c3-b5 ♖a3xe3?!

Given that Black could have chosen from the normal continuations 24...♖a4 and 24... ♖ea8 exchanging an active rook for a somewhat awkward-looking bishop is questionable.

25. f2xe3 ♗d6-b8

25...♗xe5 26.de ♖xe5 is insufficient in view of 27.♕d4 and ♗e2-f3. Rozentalis prefers to keep his bishop in order to drum up counterplay.

26. ♖e1-f1?! ...

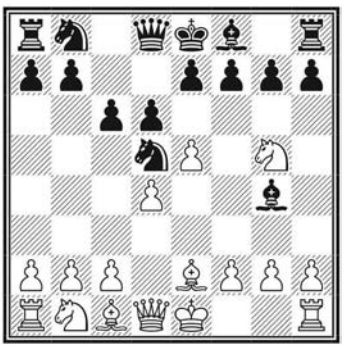
It's strange that Varga ignored 26.♘g4 ♗xg4 27.♗xg4. A battery along the h2-b8 diagonal can't be created, and therefore there is no compensation for the exchange. In the actual game the queens are exchanged off and neither side faces any danger in the endgame.

26. ... ♘d7xe5
27. d4xe5 ♕f6xe5
28. ♕b2xe5 ♖e8xe5
29. ♘b5-d4 ♗f5-g6
30. ♔g1-f2 ♔g8-g7
31. ♖c1-c3 ♘b6-d7
32. ♗e2-f3 ♗b8-d6
33. ♖cf1-d1
½ - ½

Chasing the knight from d5 is like a 'bird in the hand', but White can only gain more than a minimal advantage is Black is careless, such as attacking the white pawns at the expense of his development.

Chapter 80. 5...c6 6. ♘g5

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**♗c8-g4**
5.	**♗f1-e2**	**c7-c6**
6.	**♘f3-g5**	**...**



Offering to exchange the light-squared bishops in this way was first played by a Finish chess player Book against Reshevsky himself (Kemeri 1937). Black's pressure on the e5 pawn is now significantly reduced, while White now aims at e6 and f7.

6. ... ♗g4-f5

Black rejects this swap about twice as often as he accepts it (Game 92).

7. e5-e6!? ...

White castled meekly in the game Hunt versus Baburin (Bunratty 2010): 7...h6 8.♘f3 e6 9.a3 de 10.♘xe5 ♘d7 11.c4 ♘5f6 12.♘c3 ♘xe5 13.de ♕xd1 14.♖xd1 ♘d7 15.f4 g5 16.♗d3 ♘c5 17.♗xf5 ef with approximate equality in the endgame. 12.♗f4 (to maintain a piece on e5) is slightly more accurate, although it's a big question whether White is any better.

If White insists on swapping bishops with 7.♗g4 ♗xg4 8.♕xg4 then Black normally plays 8...h6 9.♘e4 ♕d7 (exploiting the position of White's queen on g4) 10.♕e2 de 11.de ♘a6 12.0-0 g5 – this is not only to develop the bishop but, even more importantly, to support ♘d5-f4 if White plays c2-c4. After 7.♗d3 ♗xd3 8.♕xd3 Black should equalize no matter what happens around e5. After 8...h6 9.♘f3 e6 10.0-0 de 11.♘xe5 ♘d7 12.♘f3 ♗e7 13.c4 ♘5f6 14.♘c3 0-0 15.♗f4 a6 16.♖fd1 b5 17.♘e5 (Kvon – Zubarev, Tashkent 2008) 17...♘xe5 18.♗xe5 ♘g4 19.♗g3 ♗h4 the active bishop gets swapped. Or 8...de 9.de e6 10.0-0 ♘d7 11.♖e1 ♗b4 12.c3 ♗e7 13.♕g3 0-0 14.♘f3 ♔h8 15.♗g5 ♘c5 16.♗xe7 ♘xe7 17.♘d4 ♘f5 18.♘xf5 ef 19.♘a3 ♕d5 reminding his opponent where his weaknesses lie (Shkapenko – Yu.Vovk, Warsaw 2008).

In response to 8...de White should consider the intermediate move 9.♕f5!?, which cardinally changes the nature of the battle. After 9...f6 10.♘xh7 de 11.0-0 e5 12.f4 ♕d7 13.♕g6+ ♕f7 14.♘xf8 ♖xf8 15.♕e4 ♕e6 16.fe fe 17.♖e1 ♘d7 18.♕d4 (Golubka – Pavlov,

Kiev 2006) the objectively strongest continuation 18...ed 19.♖xe6+ ♔f7 20.♖e1 ♖ae8 21.♗d2 ♖xe1 22.♗xe1 ♖e8 23.♘a3 ♘7f6 leaves Black with a slight chance of winning, whereas White has none! On the whole it's not possible to accurately assess the resulting positions, such as after 12.c4 ♘b6 13.f4 ♕d7 14.♕h5+ ♔d8 15.fe d3.

This typical pawn sacrifice doesn't mean that White is rejecting swapping bishops. Rather, he is simply trying to create better conditions for carrying it out. ♘ote that the move order 7.g4 ♗g6 8.e6 is dubious in view of 8...f6.

7. ... f7xe6

After 7...♗xe6 8.♘xe6 fe 9.♗g4 ♘c7 we slightly correct Bagirov's variations. If 10.♕e2 ♘d7 11.0-0 e5 12.de ♘xe5 13.♗h3 ♘f7 14.f4 g6 15.f5 ♘e5 16.fg hg 17.♘d2 ♘d5 and the centralized knight pair protect Black from danger. However, after 10.0-0 ♘d7 11.♖e1 e5 12.♗xd7+ ♕xd7 13.de 0-0-0 (Prandstetter – Knezevic, Stary Smokovec 1982) 14.♕d4 ♔b8 15.♗e3 c5 16.♕d3 Black still has some way to go before achieving equality.

8. g2-g4 ...

8.♗h5+ g6 9.g4 ♗xc2 10.♕xc2 gh 11.♘xe6 ♕d7(?) 12.♕f5 ♘f6 13.g5(?) ♔f7 14.♘d8+ ♔e8 15.♘e6 ♔f7 leads to a draw by move repetition, but White can improve with 13.0-0 hg 14.♗g5 ♖g8 15.♗xf6 ♖g6 16.♗xe7! ♗xe7 17.♖e1. Still, Black should draw with: 11...♕c8! 12.♕f5 hg 13.♕h5+ (this would be mate with Black's queen on d7) 13...♔d7 14.♕xg4 ♔e8 15.♕h5+.

8. ... ♗f5-g6

9. ♗e2-d3 ...

9.♘xe6 ♕d7 10.♘f4 ♘xf4 11.♗xf4 ♘a6 12.a3 ♘c7 13.♘c3 e6 14.♗d2 ♕f7 15.0-0-0 ♗e7 16.♗g3 (Marusenko – Crouch, Monmouth 2000) is quite unclear. After 9.h4 h6 10.♘xe6 ♕d7 11.♘f4 ♘xf4 12.♗xf4 e5 13.de de 14.♗xe5 ♕xd1+ 15.♗xd1 ♘d7 16.♗d4 0-0-0 17.♘d2 ♗b4 18.c3 ♖he8+ 19.♔f1 ♗f8 20.b4 ♘f6 21.♘b3 Ulybin versus Logdahl (Stockholm 2009) gradually consolidated and converted the extra pawn into a point. Here though, White also has to deal with 9...♕a5+ 10.♗d2 ♕a4.

9. ... ♗g6xd3

10. ♕d1xd3 g7-g6

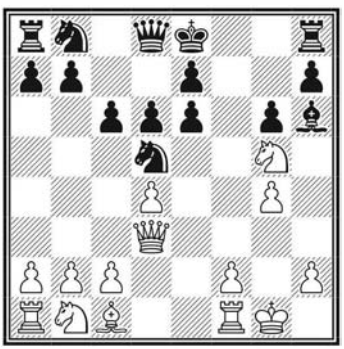
Breaking through the center didn't help Murashko to equalize in his game with Rogovski (Alushta 2001): 10...♘f6 11.♘xe6 ♕d7 12.♕e2 ♔f7 13.♘g5+ ♔g8 14.♖g1 ♘a6 15.♘c3 ♖e8 16.f4 e5 17.de de 18.f5. Evidently, Black should place his faith in massive simplifications: 12...♘a6 13.♘c3 ♘c7 14.♘xc7+ ♕xc7 15.g5 ♘d5 16.♘xd5 cd 17.♗f4 ♕c4 18.♕xc4 dc 19.♔d2 g6 20.♖he1 ♔d7 21.♔c3 ♖c8 22.♖e3 ♗g7 23.♖ae1 ♖he8 24.♖h3 ♖h8 25.♖he3 ♖he8, ½ - ½ (Wolski – Benjamin, USA 1996), although here there was no chance for Black to grab the initiative. At the same time, after 10...♕a5+ 11.♗d2 ♘b4

12.♕f3 ♕d5 13.♕f7+ ♔d7 14.0-0 (Nukin – Pavlov, St. Petersburg 2009) 14...h6 15.♘xe6 ♕xe6 16.♕xe6+ ♔xe6 17.♗xb4 ♔d7 we reach an equal ending where Black, similarly, is hardly in a position to play for a win.

11. 0-0 ...

Caution! Black needs to keep watch on the trick Ng5xh7. After 11.♘c3 ♕d7? 12.♘xh7! ♖xh7 13.♕xg6+ ♖f7 14.♘e4 there is no defense to ♘e4-g5. While in the line 11...♗h6? 12.♘xh7! ♗xc1 13.♕xg6+ ♔d7 14.♖xc1 ♖g8 15.♕f7 ♕e8 16.♕f3 the knight escapes encirclement via f8 or g5. Black should blackmail his opponent with the exchange of queens: 11...♕a5 12.0-0 ♘xc3 13.♕xc3 ♕xc3 14.bc h5 or 13.bc e5 14.♕f3 ♕d5.

11. ... ♗f8-h6!?



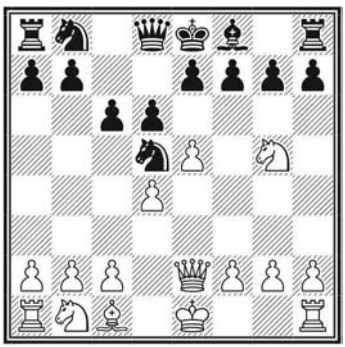
The tactic doesn't work here: 12.♘xh7? ♗xc1 13.♕xg6+ ♔d7 14.♖xc1 ♖g8 15.♕e4 ♖g7, and the knight is doomed. White should make do with equality after 12.♘xe6 ♕d7 13.♕e4 ♗xc1 14.♖xc1 ♘a6 15.♖e1 ♘ac7

Game 93

D.Kononenko – Yu.Voronov

Alushta 2010

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**♘b8-c6**
5.	**♗f1-e2**	**c7-c6**
6.	**♘f3-g5**	**♗g4xe2**
7.	**♕d1xe2**	**...**



7. ... d6xe5

Black has to make this exchange in order to block his target from moving. Otherwise, White has a dangerous initiative, as can be seen in the line 7...e6 8.♕h5 g6 9.♕f3 ♕c7 10.c4 ♘b4 11.♕f6 ♖g8 12.♘xe6! fe 13.♕xe6+ ♕e7 14.♕xg8 de 15.0-0 ♘c2 16.♘d2 ♘xa1 17.♘e4.

8. d4xe5 e7-e6

8...h6?! only encourages the knight to get to d6, which White

is ready to exchange there anyway. After 9.♘e4 e6 10.0-0 ♘d7 11.c4 ♘5b6 12.♖d1 ♕b8 13.♗f4 (13.f4!?) 13...♗e7 14.♘d6+ ♗xd6 15.♖xd6 ♘c5 16.♖d3 ♘e7 17.♘c3 ♘g6 18.♗g3 ♕c7 19.♖ad1 ♘c5 20.♖d6 (Tosic – L.Popov, Stara Pazova 2008) Black lacks counterplay.

9. 0-0 ♗f8-e7

The e7 square is more often temporarily reserved for the knight in case it retreats. In the game I.Efimov – Zelcic (Geneve 1995) Black's careful play reduced his opponent's advantage to the bare minimum: 9...♘d7 10.c4 ♘e7 11.♘c3 ♘f5 12.♖d1 ♗e7 13.♘ce4 c5 14.♘f3 ♕b6 15.♗g5 ♗xg5 16.♘exg5 ♖d8 17.♖d3 ♘b8 18.♖ad1 ♖xd3 19.♕xd3 h6 20.♘e4 0-0 21.g4 ♘e7 22.b3. The e5 pawn is poisoned in a number of variations: 11...♕c7 12.♘ce4! ♘xe5? 13.f4 ♘5g6 14.♘xf7! ♔xf7 15.♘g5+ ♔e8 16.♘xe6 or 12...♕xe5? 13.f4 ♗e7 (13...♕b8 14.♖d1 with the idea of sacrifices on f7 or e6) 14.♘xf7 ♔xf7 15.♘g5+ ♔e8 16.♕xe6. Black should leave the pawn alone and instead play 12...♘f5 13.♗f4 ♘c5 14.♖ad1 ♘xe4 15.♘xe4 ♗e7 16.♘d6+ ♗xd6 17.ed ♕d7, demonstrating that the queen's move to c7 was not justified.

10. ♕d1-h5 ...

After 10.♘f3 it's useful for Black to strengthen his knight with 10...b5!? If 11.c4 bc 12.♕xc4 ♗e7 13.♕g4 g6 14.♗h6 ♘d7 15.♕e4 ♖b8 White has prevented Black from castling, but Black's king is actually comfortable in the center and he has counterplay on the queenside. If 11.b3 ♕b6 12.c4 bc 13.bc ♕a6 14.♗g5 ♘d7?! (V.Spasov – Z.Varga, Serbia 2014) 15.♖e1 ♘5b6 16.♗xe7 ♔xe7 17.♘bd2 the king lacks shelter and Black has no counterplay. However, after 14...♗c5 15.♖e1 ♘b6 Black will soon castle and has chances to equalize.

In response to 10.♘e4 the pawn move 10...b5 is much less reliable. For example, 11.a4 b4 12.♕g4 g6 13.♗h6 ♘d7 14.♕g3 ♕c7 15.♘bd2 0-0-0 (Sax – Bogut, Sibenik 2007) 16.♘d6+ ♗xd6 17.ed ♕a5 18.♘e4 f6 19.♗d2 and then c2-c3, undermining the enemy monarch's flimsy bunker. Black should prefer 12...♔f8!? or else adopt a more restrained strategy with: 10...♕c7 11.c4 ♘b6 12.f4 ♘8d7 13.♗e3 ♘a4 14.b3 ♘ac5 15.♘bc3 ♕a5 16.♔h1 ♘xe4 17.♘xe4 ♖d8 18.a3 ♕c7 19.a4 b6 (Ostermeyer – Weil, Wuerzburg 1991).

10. ... g7-g6

This exposes the dark squares, as a result of which the king's bishop heads back for a fianchetto. If 10...♗xg5 11.♗xg5 ♕c7 12.c4 ♘b6 13.♗h4!? the e5 pawn is defended directly and the c4 pawn is defended indirectly (13...♘xc4?! 14.♕g4). White has more space and better long-term prospects.

11. ♕h5-h6 ♗e7-f8

12. ♕h6-h3 ♗f8-g7

Black is asking for his bishop's

mobility to be restricted by 13.f4!?, hence 12...♘d7 was more accurate.

13. ♘g5-f3 h7-h6
14. ♘b1-a3 ♘b8-d7
15. ♘a3-c4 ♕d8-c7
16. ♖f1-e1 b7-b5
17. ♘c4-d6+ ♔e8-f8
18. ♕h3-g3 ♖a8-d8
19. c2-c4 ...

White has sent his knight to d6 while undermining the enemy knight on d5. Here, Voronov should have played 19...bc 20.♘xc4 ♘7b6 21.♘d6 ♘d7 to test the strength of White's e5-d6 cluster.

19. ... ♘d5-b4
20. ♖e1-d1 b5xc4
21. ♗c1-d2 ♘b4-d3
22. ♘d6xc4 ...

The knight is in too much of a rush to leave its superb square. White should have completed his bishop manoeuvre, as after 22.♗c3! Black cannot play 22...♘7xe5? 23.♘xc4 ♘xf3+ 24.♕xf3 ♗xc3 25.bc (25...♘c5 26.♕f6).

22. ... ♘d7-b6
23. ♘c4xb6 a7xb6
24. ♗d2-c3 ♔f8-e7
25. ♕g3-h4 g6-g5
26. ♕h4-e4 ♘d3-c5
27. ♕e4-g4 ♖d8xd1+

Black refused to evacuate his king to h7 via g8, counting on protecting him by exchanging rooks. But he miscalculated, so it would have been better to defend with 27...♘d3 28.♕e4 ♘c5 29.♗b4 ♖d5.

28. ♖a1xd1 ♖h8-d8
29. ♖d1xd8 ♕c7xd8
30. h2-h4 ♕d8-d1+
31. ♔g1-h2 ♘c5-d3
32. ♕g4-d4 ♔e7-e8?

Black had to play 32...c5 33.♕d6+ ♔e8 34.♕b8+ ♔e7 35.♕xb6 ♕e2, as in the game he cannot simultaneously defend both the c6 pawn and the d8 square.

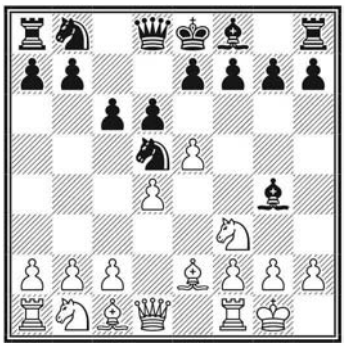
33. ♕d4xb6 ♕d1-a4
34. ♗c3-a5 ♗g7xe5+
35. ♘f3xe5 ♕a4-f4+
36. g2-g3

1-0

The 6.♘g5 sortie is pretty well justified if Black exchanges bishops with 6...♗xe2 7.♕xe2, but after 6...♗f5 White cannot claim any advantage in either quiet or sharp lines.

Chapter 81. 5...c6 6. 0-0

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 ♗c8-g4
5. ♗f1-e2 c7-c6
6. 0-0 ...



Botvinnik considered 6.♘g5 to be stronger than 6.0-0, but against Flohr (Moscow 1936) he chose not to move his developed piece a second time. Flohr replied with 6... de?!, which is somewhat lacking in ideas and allows White's knight to settle into e5. Black sticks to a passive defense, which is successful for the time being: 7.♘xe5 ♗xe2 8.♕xe2 ♘d7 9.f4 e6 10.c4 ♘5b6 11.♗e3 ♗e7 12.♘c3 0-0 13.♖f3 ♕e8 14.♖d1 ♖d8 15.b3 f5 16.♘d3 ♗f6 17.♗f2 ♕f7 18.♘e1 ♖fe8 19.♖fd3 ♘f8. It's harder to defend after 9.c4 ♘5b6 10.♖d1 e6 11.♘c3 ♗e7 12.♘e4, as if Black castles on the kingside then White can strengthen the potential storm by bringing the rook into play via d3.

6. ... ♗g4xf3

This is the best decision, all the more so as after 6...♘d7 7.ed ed 8.♘g5 ♗xe2 9.♕xe2+ ♗e7 10.c4 ♘5f6 11.♖e1 the black king remains stuck in the center, while if Black continues 6...e6 7.c4 ♘c7 8.ed ♗xd6 9.♕b3 ♕c8 10.h3 ♗f5 11.♗d3 ♗xd3 12.♕xd3 then his pieces are aimlessly huddled together along three ranks.

7. ♗e2xf3 d6xe5

7...e6 without a subsequent exchange is hardly ever seen. In reply to 8.c4 Black should definitely not retreat to e7, in order to avoid slowing his kingside development. Fercec impressively crushed Runic (Croatia 2009): 8...♘e7?! 9.ed ♕xd6 10.♘c3 ♘d7 11.d5! ♘e5 12.♘e4 ♕d7 13.de ♘xf3+ 14.♕xf3 ♕xe6 15.♗f4 0-0-0 16.♖fe1 ♕g6 17.♖ad1 ♖xd1+ 18.♖xd1 ♘f5 19.♕d3. Evacuation to the queenside failed to help the black king, so he should have improved by recognizing and fixing his earlier mistake: 10...♘g6 11.d5 ♗e7 12.de ♕xe6 (or 12...fe) 13.♘b5! ♘a6 14.♗g4! ♕xc4 15.♕d7+ ♔f8 16.♕xb7 ♖d8 17.♕xa6 ♕xb5 18.♕xa7.

In the game Keres – Veiser (Tbilisi 1946) Black retreated his knight to b6, but his subsequent queenside castling led to catastrophe: 8...♘b6 9.♕b3! (aiming at b7) 9...de 10.c5! ed 11.cb ♕xb6 12.♘d2 ♘d7 13.♖e1 0-0-0? 14.♘c4 ♕c7 15.♗d2 ♗e7 16.♖ac1 ♘c5 17.♕a3 ♘a6 18.♕a4 ♕b6 19.♘e5 ♘c5 20.♕a3 – the queen returns with a decisive pin and Black's material losses ended the game. The idea of exchanging the piece for three pawns is sound. Houdini overestimates Black's chances (after 11...ab the computer considers them almost better), but

playing 8...♘b6 and, therefore, 7... e6, is possible.

8. d4xe5 e7-e6

9. ♕d1-e2 ...

In the arising structure Black is so desperate to exchange queens that he doesn't care about losing the chance to castle. It's strange that this obvious fact doesn't dissuade White from playing 9.c4 ♘e7 10.♕xd8+ ♔xd8. After 11.b3 ♘d7 12.♗b2 ♘g6 13.♖e1 ♗b4 14.♖e4 ♔e7 15.♗h5?! (it's better to maintain the bishop and retreat it to e2) 15...♖hd8 16.♗xg6 hg 17.♗c3 a5 18.♔f1 ♘c5 19.♖d4 ♖xd4 20.♗xd4 ♖d8 in Verbruggen – Krasenkow (Vlissingen 2007) White should now exchange the bishop and defend a dull endgame. After 11.♗e4 ♘d7 12.f4 ♔c7 13.♘c3 ♘f5 14.♖e1 ♘c5 15.♖d1 ♗e7 16.♔f2 ♖hd8 17.♗e3 h5 18.♔e2 ♘xe3 19.♔xe3 f6 20.ef ♗xf6 (Plotkin – Sambuev, Toronto 2010) it's time for White to strive for simplifications along the open line in order to maintain equality. Finally, after 12.♗f4 ♘g6 13.♗xg6 hg 14.♘c3 ♔e8 15.♖ad1 ♗e7 16.♘e4 ♖h5 17.g4 ♖xe5! 18.♗xe5 ♘xe5 19.b3 ♘g4 (Kaidanov – Ivanchuk, Lvov 1987) Black should not lose with two pawns for the exchange.

The continuation 9.b3 ♘d7 10.♗b2 ♕c7 11.♕e2 is considered via the move order 9.♕e2 ♘d7 10.b3 ♕c7 11.♗b2. However, defending the pawn with 11.♖e1 is a separate line. The opposite-side castling as in Loskutov – Malyshev, Berdsk 2008, saw both kings safe after 11...0-0-0 12.♗xd5 cd 13.♘d2 ♔b8 14.♘f3 ♗e7 15.♕e2 g5 16.♖ec1 g4 17.♘d4 g5 18.♘b5 ♕a5 19.c4 dc 20.♗xc4 ♘b6 21.♖c2 and the position was double-edged. Anastasian missed a tactic from Ara Minasian (Batumi 2002) after 11...♖d8 12.g3 ♘e7 13.♕e2 ♘g6 14.a3 ♗e7 15.h4? ♘gxe5! (16.♗xe5 ♕xe5 17.♕xe5 ♘xe5 18.♖xe5 ♗f6). In reply to 15.♗h5 taking on e5 is risky due to f2-f4-f5, however, castling short is acceptable for Black.

9.♘d2 in analyzed in Game 94.

9. ... ♘b8-d7

10. c2-c4 ...

White will gain nothing if he doesn't fight for territory. After 10.b3 ♕c7 11.♗b2 ♘f4 12.♕e4 ♘g6 13.♖e1 0-0-0 14.a4 a5 15.♘a3 ♗b4 16.♖e3 ♘c5 17.♕c4 h5 Black's pieces are set up more harmoniously. Soltanici and Pavlov (Kiev 2008) reached an even endgame after 15.♗c3 ♗b4 16.♗xb4 ab 17.♕xb4 ♘dxe5 18.♗e2 ♕d6 19.♕xd6 ♖xd6 20.g3 ♖hd8 21.♘a3 ♔c7 22.f4 ♘d7 23.♘c4 ♖d4 24.♖ad1 ♘b6 25.♘e3 ♖xd1 26.♖xd1 ♘d5 27.♔f2 ♘ge7. The fragment Danin – V.Sergeev (Cappelle-la-Grande 2014) convinces us that castling kingside is also fine: 13...♖d8 14.♗h5 ♗e7 15.♗xg6 hg 16.♘d2 ♘c5 17.♕e3 0-0 18.♘f3 ♖d5 with the idea of doubling rooks.

10. ... ♘d5-e7

11. ♗c1-f4 ...

Bringing the bishop to c3 via d2 led to a dull and even game in D'Innocente – Drazic (Nova Gorica 2006): 11.♗d2 ♘g6 12.♗c3 ♕c7 13.♖e1 a5 14.♗h5 ♖d8 15.♘d2 ♘c5 16.♗xg6 hg 17.♘f3 ♗e7 18.♖ad1 0-0 19.b3 a4 20.b4 ♖xd1 21.♖xd1 ♘d7 22.a3 ♖d8. However, liquidating the central pawn grants White a lasting initiative: 15...♘dxe5 16.♘f3 ♘d3 17.♗xg6 hg 18.♖ad1 ♘c5 19.♖xd8+ ♕xd8 20.♖d1 ♕c7 21.♕e3.

11.♗g4 has also been played, to free the path for the f-pawn. The simplifications in the game Arakhamia Grant – Baburin (Liechtenstein 2007) failed to disturb equality: 11...h5!? 12.♗h3 ♕c7 13.f4 ♘f5 14.♘c3 0-0-0 15.♗xf5 ef 16.♗e3 ♗c5 17.♘a4 ♗xe3+ 18.♕xe3 ♘b6 19.♘xb6 ♕xb6 20.♕xb6 ab 21.♖ad1 ♖d7 22.♖xd7 ♔xd7 23.♖d1+ ♔e6. Escudero's greed after 12.♗xh5?! ♘f5 13.♗g4 ♘d4 14.♕d1 ♘xe5 15.♗h3? (against Suba, La Roda 2013) is convincingly punished by 15...♘ef3+ 16.gf ♖xh3.

The notable statistical dominance of games with the queenside fianchetto is quite unjustified. After 11.b3?! ♘g6 12.♗b2 ♕c7 White effectively has a choice between the questionable compensation for a pawn after 13.♗e4 ♘gxe5 14.f4 ♘g6 15.f5 ♘f4 16.♕f3 e5 and chances to resist after 13.♖e1 ♗b4 14.♘d2 ♘dxe5 15.♗xe5 ♘xe5 16.♕xe5 ♕xe5 17.♖xe5 ♗xd2 18.♖d1 ♗b4 19.♖e3 ♖d8 20.♖ed3 ♖xd3 21.♗xd3 ♔e7 (Andreasen – Zelcic, Croatia 2011). And this is without taking into account Black's alternative 12...♕g5!? 13.♖e1 ♗b4 14.♕e3 ♕xe3 15.♖xe3 0-0-0 – where it's hard for White to complete his development.

11. ... ♘e7-g6

12. ♗f4-g3 ♕d8-a5

If 12...♕c7 13.♖e1 ♗b4 14.♘c3 ♗xc3 15.bc 0-0 White needs to defend his weak pawns and cannot dare to think about an advantage. 13.♗h5 ♗c5 14.♗xg6 hg 15.♘d2 ♖h5 16.♘f3 0-0-0 17.♖ab1 ♗e7 18.b4 is stronger (Hosseinipour – Ara Minasian, Mashhad 2010). The bishop on g3 dependably defends the white king, whereas Black is not totally safe.

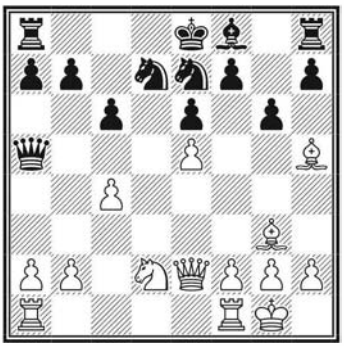
13. ♗e2-h5 ...

Here 13.♖e1?! involves a dubious pawn sacrifice and is quite unworthy of recommendation: 13...♗b4 14.♘c3 ♗xc3 15.bc ♕xc3 16.h4 ♘e7 17.♗f4 ♘f5 18.♗d2 ♕a3 19.♕e4 0-0-0 (Held – Stillger, Budapest 1995).

13. ... ♘g6-e7

The admittedly boring game Pitl versus Werner (Budapest 2007) was played correctly and needs to be studied: 13...♗e7 14.♘d2 0-0 15.♘f3 ♖fd8 16.♗xg6 hg 17.♖fd1 ♘c5 18.b3 ♖xd1+ 19.♖xd1 ♖d8 20.♖xd8+ ♕xd8 21.♗f4 ♕d3 22.♕xd3 ♘xd3 23.♗e3, ½ - ½.

14. ♘b1-d2 g7-g6





In the game Anka – Cs.Horvath (Budapest 1989) Black gained the initiative after 15.♘e4?! ♘f5 16.♗g4 ♘xg3 17.fg ♗e7 18.♘f6+ ♗xf6 19.ef 0-0-0. Black was not tempted by the line 17...♕xe5?! 18.♘f6+ ♔e7 19.♘xd7 ♕xe2 20.♗xe2 ♔xd7 21.♖xf7+ ♗e7 22.♗g4, but the intermediate move 17...h5! is close to winning (♗g4-f3 prevents check from f6, but ♗g4-h3 leaves the queen defenseless). The correct move order was 15.♗g4 h5 16.♘e4! with better prospects.

Game 94

M.Senff – M.Krasenkow

Germany 2007

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**♗c8-g4**
5.	**♗f1-e2**	**c7-c6**
6.	**0-0**	**♗g4xf3**
7.	**♗e2xf3**	**d6xe5**
8.	**d4xe5**	**e7-e6**
9.	**♘b1-d2**	**...**

The knight plans to invade on d6, supported by the queen from her starting square. Alekhine proposed this concept in his book on the Nottingham 1936 tournament and it has become relatively popular in recent years.

9.	**...**	**♘b8-d7**
10.	**♖f1-e1**	**...**

10.♘c4 is too early in view of 10... ♘7b6 11.♕d4 ♘xc4 12.♕xc4 ♕b6 with the idea of moving the bishop to c5. 10...b5 11.♘d6+ ♗xd6 12.ed 0-0 13.a4 b4 14.♕d4 ♕b6 15.♖d1 ♕xd4 16.♖xd4 a5 is maybe more accurate, after which the pawn on d6 looks more like a target than a promotion candidate.

10.	**...**	**♕d8-c7**

Somewhat less frequently Black prefers to first complete his kingside mobilization. After 10... ♗e7 11.♘c4 0-0 12.a4 a5 13.♗d2 ♕c7 14.♕e2 ♖fd8 15.♕e4 ♘b4 (15...♗b4!? 16.c3 ♗e7) 16.♗f4 ♘c5 17.♕e2 ♖d4 18.♗g3 ♖ad8 19.♘d6 it took a serious blunder by Kosikov to swing the pendulum

in favor of Baklan (Kiev 2000) – 19...♗g5? 20.♗h5! (20...g6 21.c3). After 19...♘d5 20.c3 ♖xa4 21.♖xa4 ♘xa4 22.♕c2 b5 23.♘xf7! ♔xf7 24.♕xh7 White's initiative is worth the sacrificed piece, but no more.

11.g3 is also played, in order to move the queen to e2 without worrying about being attacked by ♘d5-f4. After 11...♕c7 12.♕e2 0-0 13.♗g2 ♖fd8 14.♘f3 a5 15.h4 a4 16.a3 b5 17.♕e4 b4?! 18.♘g5 ♘f8 19.ab ♘xb4 20.♗f1 ♖d4!? 21.♕e2 h6?! 22.♘xf7! ♔xf7 23.c3 ♖d5 24.♕e4 ♘a6?! 25.♕xa4 Anand won back the knight with profits against Fernandez Garcia (Spain 2003). A lot of Black's moves were questionable; 17...♘f8 would have been safe.

The spectacular queenside attack by Black in the game van der Weide – V.Sergeev (Liechtenstein 2013) was successfully executed with the support of the king's rook: 10...♗e7 11.g3 ♕c7 12.♕e2 0-0 13.♗g2 ♖fb8 14.♘f3 b5 15.a3 a5 16.h4 b4 17.h5 ♗c5 18.♗d2 ♕b6 19.c4 bc 20.bc a4 21.c4 ♘e7 22.g4 ♕a7 23.♗g5 h6 24.♗h4 ♖b3. White is so late with his kingside attack that he should have considered 16.c4 bc 17.♕xc4, counting on attacking the a5 and c6 pawns.

The example of Magnus Carlsen's play (against Dannevig, Norway, 2005) is, him just becoming a grandmaster, although not a Super GM yet, of moderate interest. After 10...♗b4 11.♗xd5 cd 12.♕g4 ♕b6 13.♕xg7 0-0-0 14.c3 ♗c5 15.♕g3 ♖dg8 16.♕f4 ♖g7 17.b4 ♗e7 18.♘f3 ♖hg8 19.g3 ♔b8 20.♗e3 ♕c7 21.♖ac1 White has fully consolidated his position without any problems. But does he have any palpable advantage in case of 12...♗f8 13.c4 ♘b6 14.cd ♕xd5 15.♘f3 ?

11. ♘d2-c4 ...

As usual, after 11.♕e2 ♘f4 12.♕e4 ♘g6 13.♘c4 it is hard for White to exploit his spatial advantage due to the weakness on e5. The game might continue 13... ♘b6 14.♗d2 ♘xc4 15.♕xc4 0-0-0 16.♗c3 ♗e7 17.g3 (Blomqvist – Logdahl, Stockholm 2012), and the doubled rooks on the open file resolutely maintain equality.

11. ... ♘d7-b6

In reply to 11...b5?! Cmilyte sacrificed two pawns against Zhukova (Istanbul 2000) and kept the black king in the center: 12.♘d6+!? ♗xd6 13.ed ♕xd6 14.b3 ♕c5 15.c4!? bc 16.bc ♕xc4 17.♗a3 ♘7f6 18.♖b1 ♕a6 19.♕c1 ♘d7? 20.♕b2! ♖g8 21.♗xd5 ♖d8 22.♗b3. This crushing win wasn't, however, forced, although 19... ♕c8 20.♕g5! ♖g8 21.♕e5 doesn't guarantee that Black will live. Or 18...♖b8 19.♗xd5 ♕xd5 20.♕a4 ♕b6 21.♕g4 g6 22.♕d4 ♖g8 23.♖ac1 – the queen has shaken Black's defenses and they once again have problems.

That said, White doesn't have to resort to such aggressive means. He can also gain a large advantage

after 12.♗xd5 cd 13.♘d6+ ♗xd6 14.♕xd5. For example, 14...0-0 15.ed ♕c4 16.♕xc4 bc 17.♖e4 ♖fc8 18.b3 cb 19.cb ♖c6 20.♗a3 ♖ac8 21.♖a4 a6 22.g3 f6 23.♖d1 (Arbakov – Sakaev, Germany 1996) or 14...0-0-0 15.ed ed 16.dc ♖de8 17.♗f4 ♖e6 18.♖xe6 fe (it's rather amusing to witness the white pawn on c7, just where the enemy pawn chain has been broken) 19.a4 b4 20.♗d6 a5 21.c3 (Godena – Passoni, Italy 2004).

12. ♕d1-e2 ...

12.♕d4 ♘xc4 13.♕xc4 merges into the analyzed game. Pawn sacrifices here are probably less promising than in the game of Victoria Cmilyte: 12.♘d6+?! ♗xd6 13.ed ♕xd6 14.c4 ♘xc4 15.♕d4 ♘cb6 16.♕xg7 ♕f8 17.♕e5 0-0-0 18.♗g5 ♖e8 (Kovchan – V.Sergeev, Alushta 2003) – the bishops fail to compensate for the loss of the centralized knight and its shift relief in the event that it is exchanged.

Sometimes White initiates the exchange of knights, in order to remove the enemy's pride and joy from d5. After 12.♘xb6 ♘xb6 13.♕d4 Black should continue not with 13...♗e7 or 13...♖d8 (due to 14.♕g4), but 13...♘d7 and then ♗f8-e7 and 0-0. Socko failed to gain anything tangible against Zilberman (Moscow 2002) after 12...ab 13.c4 ♘e7 14.♗d2 ♖d8 15.♕c1 ♘g6 16.♗c3 ♗e7 17.♕e3 ♗c5 18.♕e4 ♕e7 19.a3 ♕h4 20.g3 ♕xe4 21.♖xe4. It's hard for the white bishops to make an impact in this rather boring game.

12. ... ♘b6xc4

13. ♕e2xc4 0-0-0

The queen's activation leaves Black without a sensible choice (13...♖d8 14.a3 ♗e7 15.♕g4).

14. a2-a3 ...

The German master is getting ready to advance the b-pawn, but in view of the standoff of the queens on the c-file he is in no rush to cross the line of demarcation. The setup a2-a4, c2-c3 and b2-b4 doesn't support b4-b5 and merely blocks the long diagonal.

14. ... h7-h6

Apart from a reciprocal attack on the kingside Black has sometimes concentrated his rooks on the open file. For example, 14...♗e7 15.b4 ♖d7 16.♗b2 ♖hd8 17.♕e4 g6 18.g3 c5 19.♖ed1 ♘b6 20.♖xd7 ♖xd7 21.b5 c4 with nicely placed pieces successfully countering the light-squared battery (Philippe – Logdahl, Budapest 2000). Krizsany and Videki demonstrate a line that is good for White: 16.♕b3 ♖hd8 17.c4 ♘b6 18.♗e3 g6 19.♕c2 c5 20.a4 cb 21.a5 ♘xc4 22.♗xa7 ♖d2(?!) 23.♕e4. However, the apparently dangerous position after 22...♘xe5 23.♕e4 ♘xf3+ 24.♕xf3 ♗g5 25.♗b6 ♕c6 is considered by the computer to be even.

15. b2-b4 g7-g5

16. ♗c1-b2 h6-h5

17. g2-g3 ...

Senff rejected 17.h3, probably

due to g5-g4, even when this was to do with a pawn sacrifice. In any case (and also after 17.♗e4 without opening the escape hole) the position is unclear.

17. ... g5-g4
18. ♗f3-g2 ♗f8-g7
19. ♕c4-e4 ♘d5-e7

He should have strengthened the bishop via 19...♗h6. Krasenkow frees up the file for the rook to invade, which, however, is weaker.

20. a3-a4 ♖d8xd2
21. ♕e4-f4 ...

The German master undertakes a reciprocal queen invasion, but thereby loses his advantage. 21.♗d4!? cuts the rook off from the rest of Black's army and at the same times creates nasty threats against the black king.

21. ... ♖d2xc2
22. ♕f4xf7 ♖c2xb2
23. ♕f7xg7 ♖h8-d8
24. ♖a1-d1 ♘e7-d5

Playing it safe. Black decided not to allow the capture on e6 (24... ♖xb4!? 25.♕xf7 ♔b8 26.♕xe6 ♖xa4). That said, the struggle is no less exciting here, and the assessment is still far from being clear.

25. ♕g7-g6 ♕c7-e7
26. b4-b5 ♖d8-f8

The Grandmaster is not yet ready to settle for a draw by perpetual check (26...♖xf2!? 27.♔xf2 ♕c5+ 28.♔f1 ♖f8+ 29.♗f3 ♖xf3+ 30.♔g2 ♖f2+ 31.♔h1 ♖xh2+! or 27.bc ♖xg2+! 28.♔xg2 ♘e3+ 29.♖xe3 ♖xd1 30.♖c3 ♖d2+). Black is lucky that instead of the sensible 27.♖f1 his opponent charges forward headlong.

27. b5xc6 ♖f8xf2
28. ♗g2xd5 c6xd5
29. ♕g6-g8+ ♔c8-c7
30. ♕g8xd5 b7xc6
31. ♖d1-c1 ♕e7-d7
32. ♕d5xd7+ ♔c7xd7
33. e5-e6+ ♔d7-e7
34. ♖c1xc6 ♖f2-g2+
35. ♔g1-h1 ♖g2xh2+
36. ♔h1-g1 ♖b2-g2+
37. ♔g1-f1 ♖g2xg3
38. ♖c6-c7+ ♔e7-f6

The players are a good match here. Krasenkow is desperately trying to win (38...♔d6 immediately ends the game), but the e-pawn neutralizes his efforts.

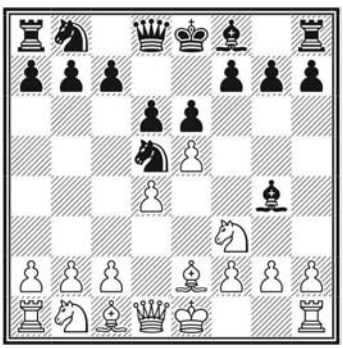
39. ♖c7-f7+ ♔f6-g6
40. ♖e1-e4 ♖g3-b3
41. ♔f1-g1 ♖b3-h3
42. e6-e7 ♖h2-h1+
43. ♔g1-f2 ♖h3-h2+
44. ♔f2-g3 h5-h4+
45. ♔f3xg4 ♖h1-g1+
46. ♔g4-f4 ♖h2-f2+
47. ♔f4-e3 ♖g1-e1+
48. ♔e1xf2 ♖e1xe4
49. e7-e8♕+ ♖e4xe8
½ - ½

The most natural and popular continuation isn't dangerous for Black. Moreover, due to the weakness on e5 White can get into difficulties all over the place. The Flohr System hence remains a solid and quality choice.

Part 16 4. ♘f3 ♗g4 5. ♗e2 e6

Introduction

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**♗c8-g4**
5.	**♗f1-e2**	**e7-e6**



The door shuts behind the queen's bishop and opens before the king's bishop. This is probably the most deeply analyzed line in the Alekhine Defense.

In Chapter 82 we consider lines where White either waits to castle kingside or rejects this completely. Variations where White fianchettoes his queen's bishop account for most of Chapter 83. The core lines, however, account for two pairs of chapters – the e5xd6 exchange (84 and 86) and without any exchange (85 and 87). Each pair has one chapter with and without h2-h3 and ♗g4-h5.

Chapter 82. Various 6th moves

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**♗c8-g4**
5.	**♗f1-e2**	**e7-e6**
6.	**h2-h3**	**...**

In the vast majority of games White castles here, but deviations are also seen. The sortie with 6.♘g5 isn't a very good idea. The game Westerinen – Schnabel (Reykjavik 2000) saw Black equalize easily

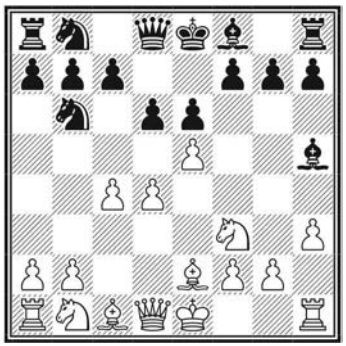
after 6...♗xe2 7.♕xe2 ♗e7 8.♘f3 0-0 9.0-0 ♘b6 10.♕e4 de 11.de ♕d5 12.♕g4 ♕c4 13.♕xc4 ♘xc4 14.b3 ♘b6 15.♗b2 ♘c6 16.♘bd2 ♖fd8, while with the help of 6...♗f5 Black could have played for more. Mamedyarov (as Black) indeed achieved much more, against Shytaj (Chalkidiki 2003): 6...♗f5 7.f4 de 8.fe (8.de h6 9.♘f3 ♘b4 is no better) 8...♗e7 9.♘f3 c5 10.0-0 ♘c6 11.c3 0-0 12.♔h1 ♖c8 13.a3 cd 14.♘xd4 ♘xd4 15.cd?! ♗g5! Evidently, it's time to focus on defense (7.ed h6 8.♘f3 ♗xd6 9.♗d3).

6. ... ♗g4-h5

Retreating to f5 is also acceptable for Black. After 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.♗d3 ♗xd3 9.♕xd3 0-0 10.♕e4 ♘d7 11.♖d1 ♘b4 12.c4 d5 13.cd ed 14.♕e2 c6 15.♘c3 ♘a6 16.♕d3 ♘c7 17.♘e2 ♘e6 18.♘g3 g6 19.♗h6 ♖e8 (Ni Hua – Torre, Cebu 2007) Black successfully redeployed his knight and achieved a satisfactory position. White should have reconfigured his structure with 10.c4 ♘b6 11.ed cd 12.♖e1.

If the bishop is exchanged White should immediately reject an unattractive line in the Flohr System: 5...c6 6.h3?! ♗xf3 7.♗xf3 de 8.de e6 9.0-0 ♘d7. Fortunately for White, after 6...♗xf3 7.♗xf3 Black cannot play 7...de?! due to 8.c4, while in response to 7...c6 White exchanges on d6 and only then castles, with slightly better prospects.

7. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6



8. ♘b1-c3 ...

With a move order of 8.ed cd 9.♘c3 Khalifman analyzes the continuation 9...d5 in detail, although it has yet to be tested in practice. White prevents an exchange on f3 (while weakening the d4 pawn) and gains a spatial advantage: 10.g4 ♗g6 11.c5 ♘6d7 12.♕b3 ♕c8 13.♗f4 a6 14.0-0 ♘c6 15.♖fe1 ♗e7 16.♗f1 0-0 17.♖ac1.

8. ... ♗f8-e7

9. e5xd6 ...

Castling leads to the main lines, but in this chapter we analyze lines with the help of which White counts on making gains from waiting to castle or not castling at all. The early 9.d5?! fails to bring any gains: 9...ed 10.cd de 11.g4 ♗g6 12.♘xe5 ♘8d7 13.♘xd7 ♕xd7 14.♗b5 c6 15.dc bc 16.♕xd7+ ♔xd7 17.♗a6 ♗d6 18.♗e3 h5 19.♔e2 ♖ae8 20.a4 hg 21.a5 ♘c8 22.hg ♖xh1 23.♖xh1 ♗f4 with an approximately equal and complicated ending (J.Polgar – Jussupow, Dortmund 1987). With the help of 12...0-0 Black avoids

simplifications for now and is ready to exploit the holes in the enemy camp.

Caution! If White doesn't hurry up and castle then Black needs to weigh up three times the consequences of evacuating his king. After 9.♗e3 0-0?! 10.g4 ♗g6 11.h4 White has a dangerous initiative, while after 11...f6 12.h5 ♗e8 13.ef ♗xf6 14.g5 ♗e7 15.d5 e5 16.♘e4 c6?! 17.g6! hg 18.♘fg5 it is murderous (Rodchenkov – Balashov, Kazan 2007). On the other hand, after 9...♘8d7!? 10.g4 ♗g6 11.♕d2 de 12.de c6 13.♖d1 ♕c7 14.♗f4 ♘c5 15.♕e3?! ♘ba4 (J.Polgar – Morozevich, Frankfurt 1999, rapid game) being able to castle would have been most useful for White (16.♘xa4 ♘xa4 17.b3 ♕a5+). In the line 11.ed cd 12.d5 ed 13.♘xd5 0-0 14.0-0 ♘xd5 15.♕xd5 ♘c5 16.♗xc5 dc 17.♕xb7 ♖b8 18.♕xa7 ♖xb2 19.♖ad1 ♗d6 (Calistri – Bauer, France 2006) White isn't so bad, but Black clearly has some compensation for the pawn.

9. ... c7xd6

10. d4-d5 ...

This particular move order was introduced into practice at the end of the last century by Viorel Bologan on the recommendation of famous theoretician Vyacheslav Chebanenko. It is a sensible concept: White only pays attention to the flank after stabilizing the center.

10. ... e6-e5

If Black captures then he saddles himself with a weak pawn, is unable to play d6-d5 and is forced to adopt a passive defense. For example, 10... ed 11.♘xd5 0-0 12.0-0 ♘c6 13.♗e3 ♘xd5 14.♕xd5 ♗xg5 15.♕d2 ♗f6 16.♖ad1 ♖e8 17.b3 a5 18.a3 (18.♕xd6 ♘b4) 18...♕c8 19.♘e1 ♘e5 20.a4 (Aronian – Anastasian, Yerevan 2003). After 10...0-0 11.de fe Black is not devoid of active play in the center but still fails to achieve equality: 12.♘d4 ♗f7 13.0-0 ♘c6 14.♗e3 ♔h8 15.b3 d5 16.cd ed 17.♕d2 ♘d7 (here and on the next move Nogueiras recommended ♗e7-f6) 18.♘f5 ♘f6 19.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 20.♘b5 ♘e4 21.♕b2 a6 22.♘d4 ♕f6 23.♖ac1 ♘e7 24.♕a3 (Gongora – Nogueiras, Holguin 2002).

11. g2-g4 ...

Iordachescu against Chigladze (Plovdiv 2008) failed to gain anything from attacking in the center: 11.c5 dc 12.g4 ♗g6 13.♗b5+ ♘8d7 14.d6 ♗h4 15.♗xd7+ ♘xd7 16.♕a4?! ♕f6 17.♘xh4 ♕xh4 18.♘d5 ♖d8 19.♘c7+ ♔f8 20.♗e3 h5 – the white king is clearly in a worse state than Black's. However, 16.♕d5 is quite reasonable, taking aim at three enemy pawns at the same time.

If 11.♗e3 then the battle between the armies gets postponed, but, often, not for long: 11...♗xf3 12.♗xf3 ♘8d7 13.♕e2 ♖c8 14.b3 f5 15.g4!? e4 16.♗g2 ♗f6 17.♘b5!

♗xa1 18.♘xd6+ ♔f8 19.0-0 ♗e5 20.♘f5 h5?! 21.f4! ef 22.♕xf3 with a crushing attack (Bologan – Tischbierek, Vienna 1996). Black can resist much more successfully with an extra rook, for example, via 20...g6 21.♘d4 ♔g8 22.♘e6 ♕f6 23.♗e4 ♗d6 24.f4 ♘f8.

11. ... ♗h5-g6

12. h3-h4 ...

Let's return to the c4-c5 advance, which is very much a blockading move: 12.c5 ♘6d7 13.cd ♗xd6 14.h4 h5 15.g5 ♘c6 16.♘d2 ♘b4 17.♘de4 ♘c5 (17...♘b6!?) 18.f3 ♖c8 19.♗e3 0-0 20.0-0 ♕d7 (Solodovnichenko – Shivananda, India 2009). White has only a microscopic advantage.

12. ... h7-h6

In practice, Black has blocked the kingside just as frequently. For example, 12...h5 13.g5 ♘8d7 14.♗e3 ♖c8 15.b3 ♘c5 16.♖g1 ♘bd7 17.b4 e4?! 18.♘d2 ♘d3+ 19.♔f1 ♘xb4 20.♘dxe4 0-0 21.♗d4 ♖e8 22.a3 ♘a6 23.♗xh5 ♖xc4 (Hamdouchi – Baburin, Saint Vincent 2006) 24.♗xg6 fg 25.♕d3 ♖c8 26.♖b1 with a clear advantage for White – but Black could have improved with 17... ♘e4 18.♘xe4 ♗xe4 19.♘d2 ♗g6. Haslinger versus Spence (Port Erin 2006) managed to invade on c5 but failed to achieve anything concrete after 15.♘d2 ♘c5 16.♗xc5 ♖xc5 17.♘ce4 ♗xe4 18.♘xe4 ♖c7 19.c5 ♘c8 20.♗b5+ ♔f8.

13. ♗e2-d3 ...

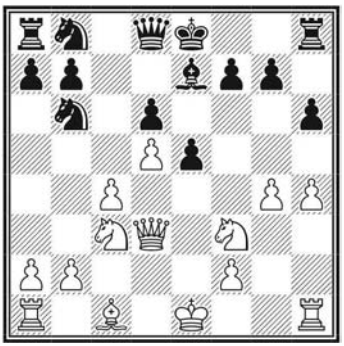
It's useful to exchange the active bishop. If instead White plays 13.♗e3 ♘8d7 14.b3 ♘f6 15.♘d2 ♘bd7 16.h5 ♗h7 17.♘f1 ♘e4 18.♘xe4 ♗xe4 19.♗f3 ♗h7 20.♘g3 ♗h4 21.♘e4 ♗xe4 22.♗xe4 ♗g5 23.♕d2 ♗xe3 24.♕xe3 0-0 25.♖g1 ♕h4 (Vocaturo – Diamant, Belfort 2005) then this structure favors the black knight versus the white bishop. Moreover, the black king is safe.

Throwing in 13.h5 ♗h7 is worse for White due to the variation 14.♗d3 ♗xd3 15.♕xd3 ♕c8 16.b3 ♕xg4 17.♖g1 ♕xh5 (Tissir – Pinheiro, Dos Hermanas 1998) 18.♖xg7 ♘8d7 19.♗a3 ♘f6 followed by castling long. 14.♗e3, planning to exchange the knight on b6, lessens the impact of the double attack.

13. ... ♗g6xd3

After 13...♕c8?! 14.♗xg6 fg 15.♘d2 0-0 16.b3 ♖f4 17.g5! hg 18.hg ♕f5 19.♕e2 (Bologan – Agdestein, Yerevan 1996) the isolation of the g-pawn and attack on it turns out to be in vain (19... ♗xg5?! 20.♘de4 ♖h4 21.♖xh4 ♗xh4 22.♘xd6 ♕h3 23.♗b2). The Norwegian Grandmaster continued 19...♘a6 20.♘de4 ♖f3 21.♗e3 ♘d7 22.0-0-0 ♘dc5 23.♖h4, but was unable to break the blockade and deservedly lost.

14. ♕d1xd3 ...

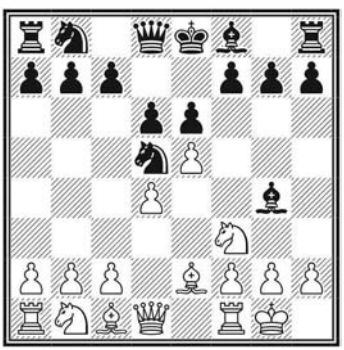


Here the double attack on c4 and g4 is not nearly as effective: 14...♕c8 15.b3 ♕xg4 16.♖g1 ♕h5 17.♖xg7 f5?! (he should have chased the rook away with 17...♗f8) 18.♘b5 ♔f8 19.♖xe7 ♔xe7 20.♗a3, and White is on the verge of winning (Alvir – Wallner, Vienna 2011). Black should have played 14...♘a6 15.♗e3 ♕c8 16.♗xb6 ab 17.♖g1 0-0 – and his position is more pleasant here. Exchanging on b6 is without doubt a concession, but it's not clear how White can avoid it – after all, after 15.b3 ♕xg4 the knight is hanging, while ♖h1-g1 is now impossible.

This line is a 'blank spot' in theory and is highly recommended in practice in view of the large number of interesting variations. If Black plays carefully he should have nothing to complain about.

Chapter 83. Diversions from the tabiya

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**♗c8-g4**
5.	**♗f1-e2**	**e7-e6**
6.	**0-0**	**...**



6. ... ♗f8-e7

Caution! 6...Bxf3 7.Bxf3 de? is too risky in view of 8.c4 (although more often players mechanically continued 8.de). On the other hand, 7...c6 is partially rehabilitated in Chapter 81 via the move order 5...c6 6.0-0 ♗xf3 7.♗xf3 e6.

The continuation 6...♘d7 only has a weak impact on the enemy center. White sets his pieces up harmoniously and retains a lasting advantage: 7.c4 ♘5b6 8.ed cd 9.b3 ♗e7 10.♘c3 0-0 11.♗f4 ♘f6 12.♕d2 ♘bd7 13.h3 ♗h5 14.♘b5 ♕b6 15.b4 ♗xf3 16.♗xf3 (Efimenko – Korobov, Alushta

2001). The further redeployment of the knight doesn't impact our evaluation of the position: 14...♘e4 15.♕e3 ♘df6 16.♗d3 ♗xf3 17.gf a6 18.fe ab 19.cb.

The popularity of the mysterious 6...a6 move predicted by Bagirov never materialized. Ultimately, the Alekhine Defense is not so solid an opening that giving up a move is recommended. In particular, moving the rook's pawn is unnecessary after 7.c4 ♘b6 8.ed cd 9.♘c3 ♗e7 10.d5 ♗xf3 11.♗xf3 e5 12.♗g4 0-0 13.♕d3, and also after 10...0-0 11.de ♗xe6 12.♘d4 ♗d7 13.♗e3 ♘c6 14.♖c1 ♘e5 15.b3 ♖e8 16.♕d2 ♗f8 17.♖fd1 ♕c7 18.♘c2 ♘c6 19.♘e1 ♘e5 20.♘d3 ♗g4 21.♘f4 (Renet – Lukasiewicz, Cannes 1994) – the knight has come close to d5, while if Black plays 21... ♗f5 then White can move it to h5.

6...♘c6 is considered in Game 8 of the history section.

7. c2-c4 ...

Kamsky played less ambitiously against Christiansen (San Diego 2006): 7.♖e1 0-0 8.♘bd2 ♘c6 9.ed cd 10.c3 ♖b8 11.♘f1 ♗h5 12.♗d3. After that, playing 12...♘f6 13.♗g5 d5 14.h3 ♘e8 15.♗f4 ♗d6 16.♗xd6 ♘xd6 would have been strategically justified for Black and would have guaranteed him equality.

7. ... ♘d5-b6

8. e5xd6 ...

White relatively rarely fianchettoes his dark-squared bishop without carrying out this exchange (either immediately or later). One example is Shmit – Shabalov (Riga 1989): 8.b3 0-0 9.♗b2 a5 10.♘a3 d5 11.c5 ♘6d7 12.♘c2?! b6 13.cb c5! (this trick doesn't work after 12.♘b5) 14.b7 ♖a7 15.dc ♗xf3 16.gf ♗xc5 17.f4 ♖xb7, and White has no compensation for his broken kingside.

8. ... c7xd6

9. b2-b3 ...

9.♘bd2 0-0 10.b3 is considered later (in Game 95), but the b-pawn is sometimes moved more forcefully. Play could continue 10.b4 ♗f6 11.♗b2 ♘c6 12.a3 d5 13.c5 ♘c8 14.♘b3 ♘8e7 15.♕d2 ♘f5 16.b5 ♘ce7, and it's not easy for White to make progress on the queenside (Stefansson – Einarsson, Greenland 2003).

9. ... 0-0

10. ♘b1-c3 ...

Refer to Game 95 for when the knight moves to d2.

10. ... ♘b8-c6

After 10...d5 11.c5 ♘c8 Hunt gained an advantage against V.Sergeev (Legnica 2011) with the help of 12.♘e5!? ♗xe2 13.♕xe2 ♗f6 14.♗f4 ♘e7 15.♖fd1 ♘bc6 16.♘b5 g5?! 17.♘g4 ♘f5 18.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 19.♗e5 ♘xe5 20.de ♕g6 21.♘d6 ♘xd6 22.cd. Despite an improvement for Black with 16... ♘f5 17.g4 ♗xe5 18.♗xe5 ♘xe5 19.gf ♘c6 20.fe ♕h4, occupying e5 was worth considering. Maybe we should rely on the expert: 11... ♗xf3!? 12.♗xf3 ♘c8 13.b4 b6!?

(with the threat of a7-a5) 14.♗e3 ♗f6 15.♕b3 ♘c6 16.♖ad1 ♘8e7 17.a3 ♘f5 18.♘e2 ♕c7 19.♗g4 bc 20.dc ♘xe3 21.fe a5 22.♘d4 ab 23.ab ♗xd4 24.ed ♖fb8 25.b5 ♘xd4! 26.♖xd4 ♕xc5 27.♕b4 ♖xb5 28.♕xc5 ♖xc5 (Milovanovic – Alburt, Parsippany 2003). Active play by both sides led to an objectively drawn endgame, although Alburt's much stronger chess skills ensured him the full point.

11. ♗c1-e3 ...

Now, the pawn on b3 has the sole function of supporting the c4 pawn (or of guarding the c4 square, if that pawn moves to c5). With a knight on c3 the bishop on b2 is rather feeble. For example, see Larino Nieto – Fernandez Garcia (Sevilla 2004): 11.♗b2 d5 12.c5 ♘c8 13.h3 ♗xf3 14.♗xf3 ♗f6 15.♘e2 ♘8e7 16.♘g3 ♘g6 17.♖e1 ♘h4 18.♗g4 g6 19.♕d2 ♗g7 20.♗d1 ♕f6 21.♘e2 ♘f5 and Black wins the weak pawn. There is a lot of similarity here to the scenario that is unpleasant for White in the Exchange System, as the black bishop is eventually fianchettoed. Exchanging the bishop with 13.♘e1 ♗xe2 14.♘xe2 seems to be the lesser evil for White.

11.d5 ed 12.♘xd5 ♘xd5 13.♕xd5(?) ♗f6 14.♖b1 ♘b4 15.♕xb7 ♖b8 16.♕xa7 ♗f5 loses the exchange for White without any obvious compensation. However, contrary to commentary by Bagirov, the pawn advance in itself doesn't deserve a question-mark. After 13.cd ♗xf3 14.♗xf3 ♘e5 15.♗e2 ♕a5 the position is equal.

11. ... d6-d5

After 11...♗f6 12.♘e4 ♗e7 13.♘g3 d5 Black has managed to carry out his thematic central counter strike just as successfully as when the knight is on c3. The variation 13.d5 ed 14.cd ♘b4 15.♗xb6 ♕xb6 16.a3 ♘a6 17.♘fd2 ♗f5 18.♘c4 ♕d8 19.♘g3 ♗d7 20.b4 ♖e8 21.♖c1 ensured Tal a small advantage against V.Bagirov (Moscow 1979), although the continuation 16...♗xf3 17.♗xf3 ♘a6 18.b4 ♘c7 would have ensured fully equal chances. The white bishop gets blocked by the d5 pawn and his spatial advantage doesn't give him anything.

12. c4-c5 ♘b6-c8

The knight is heading for f5 via e7, after which the bishop will free up the transit square. Black shouldn't rush with exchanging on f3, but should wait for an invitation from White in the form of h2-h3. If 12...♗xf3 13.♗xf3 ♘c8 14.b4 ♗f6 15.b5 ♘a5 16.♗e2 ♘e7 17.♗d3 ♖e8 18.♖c1 ♘g6 19.g3 ♖c8 20.h4 then Black clearly lacks oxygen (Perunovic – Brajic, Leskovac 2002).

Bagirov considers 12...♘d7 to be acceptable on the basis of the game Tal – Vasiukov (Kharkov 1967): 13.b4 ♘xb4 14.♖b1 ♘c6 15.♖xb7 ♖b8 16.♖xb8 ♘dxb8 17.h3 ♗xf3 18.♗xf3 ♕a5. After 17.♕d2 ♘a5

with the idea of ♘b8-c6 careful play by Black would also neutralize his opponent's advantage. Therefore, White should probably prepare this with 13.a3, which is nevertheless slow. Draskovic versus Ivanovic (Cetinje 2009) failed to gain more than equality after 13...♗f6 14.b4 ♘e7 15.h3 ♗xf3 16.♗xf3 ♘f5 17.♕d3 g6 18.♖ad1 ♗g7 19.♘e2 ♘h4 20.♗f4 ♖e8 21.g3 ♘xf3+ 22.♕xf3 a6 23.♖fe1 ♘b8 24.♗e5 ♘c6 25.♗xg7 ♔xg7.

13. b2-b4 ...

Wolloner versus Teske (Hamburg 2013) held back from queenside operations, but Black launched counterplay there: 13.h3 ♗xf3 14.♗xf3 ♗f6 15.g4 b6!? 16.cb ab 17.♖c1 ♕d7 18.♕d2 ♘d6 19.♘a4 ♖fb8 20.♕c3? (this was an oversight in a worse position; he should have continued 20.♗g2) 20...♘xd4! 21.♗xd4 ♘b5.

13. ... a7-a6

With the knight on c8 the line 13...♘xb4 14.♖b1 ♘c6 15.♖xb7 is clearly better for White.

14. ♖a1-b1 ...

14.♕b3 was played in the game Dolmatov versus Morozevich (Moscow 1995), albeit by a different move order. After 14...♗f6 15.♖fd1 ♘8e7 16.♖d2 ♘f5 17.♖ad1 ♗xf3 18.♗xf3 ♗g5 19.♗xg5 ♕xg5 20.g3 h5 21.♗g2 h4 22.♘e2 hg 23.hg g6 24.a3 ♔g7 the experienced Grandmaster found himself in a turgid defense and it took a huge effort for him to secure a draw.

14. ... ♗e7-f6

15. a2-a4 ...

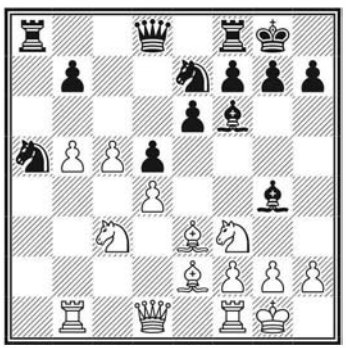
If 15.h3 ♗xf3 16.♗xf3 ♘8e7 17.g4 the knight is prevented from moving to f5, but instead it moves to g6 and, after ♗f6-h4, Black plans f7-f5.

15. ... ♘c8-e7

16. b4-b5 a6xb5

Sek (Black), facing Pokazanjev in Sochi 2006, was fine without this exchange: 16...♘a5 17.♘d2 ♗xe2 18.♘xe2 ♘f5 19.♕c2 ♖e8 20.♕d3 ♘xe3 21.fe e5 22.♖f2 ♗g5 23.♖bf1 f6 24.de ♖xe5 25.♘f4 ♖c8 with approximately equal chances in a complicated position. **The knight on a5 is rarely an outcast in such structures, as it always threatens to intervene in events from c4.**

17. a4xb5 ♘c6-a5



Now White has to be diligent, in order to avoid getting into trouble. A typical example is Novosak – Kaunas (Frydek Mistek 1996): 18.♘a4?! ♗xf3 19.♗xf3?! (it was better to take with the pawn to prevent the knight from getting

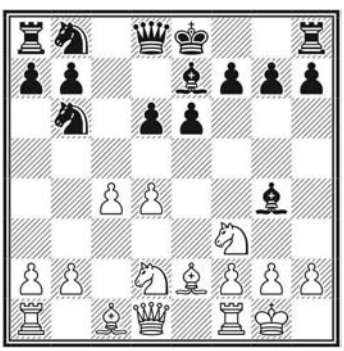
active) 19...♘c4 20.♗e2 ♘xe3 21.fe ♗g5 22.♖f3 ♘f5 23.♔f2 ♗xe3+! 24.♖xe3 ♘xe3 25.♔xe3 ♕g5+ 26.♔f2 ♖xa4! 27.♕xa4 ♕f5+ 28.♔g3 ♕xb1 and Black was the exchange up with an easy win. 18.♘d2 ♗xe2 19.♕xe2 is more prudent, whereupon the pretty computer variation 19... ♘f5 20.♕d3 ♘c4!? 21.♘xd5!? ♕xd5 22.♘xc4 ♘xd4 23.♖bd1 ♖fd8 24.♘b6 ♕h5 25.♗xd4 ♖xd4 26.♕xd4 ♗xd4 27.♘xa8 ♗xf2+! 28.♔xf2 ♕xc5+ ends in perpetual check.

Game 95

V.Babula – J.Majer

Pardubice 2004

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**♗c8-g4**
5.	**♗f1-e2**	**e7-e6**
6.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
7.	**e5xd6**	**c7xd6**
8.	**0-0**	**♗f8-e7**
9.	**♘b1-d2**	**...**



9. ... 0-0

Black prefers 9...♘c6 if he is worried about b2-b4. However, as we have already noted he should not be concerned about the pawn advancing two squares.

10. b2-b3 ♘b8-c6

11. ♗c1-b2 ...

If 11.h3 ♗h5 12.♗b2 then Bagirov's suggestion 12...♗g6 has gained a good reputation. Its inventor successfully coped with Tal (Leningrad 1977) after 13.a3 a5 14.♗c3 ♗f6 15.♖e1 (15.b4?! ♘a4! 16.♕xa4 ab) 15...e5 16.♘f1 e4 17.♘3h2 d5 18.♘g4 ♗g5 19.♘e5 ♘xe5 20.de dc 21.bc ♕xd1 22.♖exd1 ♖fc8. Tomashevsky versus Timofeev (Elista 2001) allowed b2-b4, but after 13...♗f6 14.b4 e5 15.d5 ♘d4 16.♘xd4 ed 17.♕b3 ♖c8 18.♖ac1 ♖e8 19.♗d3 he ignored the promising tactic 19...♗g5 20.♖fd1 ♕e7 21.♗xd4 ♗xd3 22.♕xd3 ♗xd2 23.♖xd2 ♘xc4!

11. ... d6-d5

Bagirov shows that 11...♗f5 is also possible, planning not only d6-d5, but also e6-e5. There are almost no new examples of this line, so let's take an old one from his monograph played by the 'banned' Alburt (versus Benjamin, USA 1981): 12.a3 a5 13.♖e1 ♗f6 14.♗f1 d5 15.c5 ♘d7 16.♖c1 ♕b8 17.♗b5 ♖c8 18.b4 ab 19.ab b6 20.♕e2 bc 21.bc ♖a5 22.♗xc6 ♖xc6 23.♖a1 ♖axc5!? (23...♖ca6 24.♖xa5 ♖xa5 25.♗c1 ♖a4 is also comfortable

for Black) 24.dc ♗xb2 25.♖xa6 ♖xa6 26.♕xa6 ♘xc5 27.♕a5 ♘d3 28.♖d1 h6. The Alekhine Defense expert skillfully outplayed his rather strong opponent.

12. c4-c5 ...

Carrying out exchanges in the game Bulatovic – Markovic (Belgrade 2008) saddled White with a somewhat worse position: 12.♘e5?! ♗xe2 13.♕xe2 ♘xe5 14.de dc 15.♘xc4 ♘xc4 16.♕xc4 ♖c8 17.♕e4 ♕b6 18.♗d4 ♕b4 19.♖fe1 b6 20.♕e3 ♖fd8. In fact, there is no sensible alternative to gaining more space.

If we add here the moves 12.h3 ♗h5 then we come across a number of games in the database, mostly quite old ones. But there is one recent game, quite an exciting one and which was played by strong opponents: 13.c5 ♘d7 14.a3 ♗f6 15.b4 a6 16.♖e1 b6 17.♕c1 bc (17...♕c7 is also good, avoiding forcing play for now) 18.dc e5 19.♘d4 ♘xd4 20.♗xh5 e4 21.♗g4 (Najer – A.Smirnov, Sochi 2012) 21...♘e6 22.♗xe6 fe with a complicated position.

12. ... ♘b6-c8

Kozionov and Kovalenko (Izhevsk 2011) were on the verge of a tense struggle after: 12...♘d7 13.♖e1 ♖e8 14.♘f1 ♗f6 (14...♗xf3 15.♗xf3 b6 16.cb ♕xb6 is just as good) 15.♕d2 a5 16.♘e3 ♗h5 17.a3 b6. But the junior suddenly lost his way with 18.♘e5? (18.b4 bc 19.dc ♗xb2 20.♕xb2 ♗xf3 21.♗xf3 ♕c7 was correct) 18...♗xe5 19.♗xh5 ♗xh2+ 20.♔f1 ♕h4.

Kasparov believes that retreating to c8 is less accurate. However, it's also acceptable.

13. a2-a3 ...

13.♗c3 is also of interest, in order to gain a tempo with a2-a4. Moving the bishop came in handy for Okara in his game with Kahn (Budapest 2007): 13...♗f6 14.b4 a6 15.a4 ♘8e7 16.b5 ♘a5?! (he should have brought the knight home) 17.h3 ♗xf3 18.♘xf3 ♘c4 19.♕b3 b6 20.♖fc1 ab 21.ab ♖xa1 22.♖xa1 ♕b8 23.c6 ♘d6 24.♕a3, and Black is in difficulty in view of ♗c3-b4. He should probably have returned his knight to base camp with 14... ♘6e7.

13. ... ♗e7-f6

14. b3-b4 a7-a6

15. ♗b2-c3 ...

With the addition of h2-h3 and ♗g4-h5 (much earlier) 16.♖c1 was seen in the dramatic game Weinstein (who later became known as Kasparov) versus Yermolinsky from the final round of the USSR junior championships (Vilnius 1975). This game is of no theoretical or artistic merit, as Black played 16...♘8e7?? but White failed to impale his opponent with 17.g4 ♗g6 18.g5. After more blunders by both sides Black eventually lost.

15. ... ♘c8-e7

16. a3-a4 ♘e7-g6

17. b4-b5 ♘c6-e7

18. g2-g3 ♘e7-f5

Here, Babula could have played 19.ba ba 20.♖b1 and taken control of the b-file, which would have been impossible had Black played 18... ♗f5 19.ba ba 20.♖a2 ♕c7 21.♖b2 ♖fb8.

19. ♘d2-b3 ♖f8-e8
20. ♖f1-e1 h7-h5
21. ♕d1-d2 a6xb5
22. a4xb5 ♖a8xa1
23. ♘b3xa1 b7-b6

We get the impression that Majer was going all out to defeat his titled opponent (whose rating was nearly 300 points higher). Black should have played 23...♕d7 with the aim of sending the rook to the open file.

24. ♘a1-c2 b6xc5
25. d4xc5 e6-e5
26. ♗c3-a5 ...

If 26.c6, then 26...d4 27.♗a5 ♕a8 28.♗c7 ♘fe7!, putting the brakes on the white pawns. White would probably not have any advantage in this line.

26. ... ♕d8-a8
27. ♗a5-c7 e5-e4
28. ♘f3-d4 ♘f5xd4

The variations 28...♗xe2 29.♘xe2 ♗e5 30.♗b6 d4 31.♘exd4?? ♗xd4 32.♘xd4 ♘e5 and 30.♗xe5 ♘xe5 31.♘xd4 ♘xd4 32.♘xd4 ♕a4 (with the idea of 33... ♕xd4) demonstrate Black's key tactical idea. That said, the double exchange is not yet an error...

29. ♘c2xd4 ♗g4xe2
30. ♘d4xe2 ♕a8-a4?

The attack on the b-pawn and support for d5-d4 has been played at the wrong moment. After 30... ♗e5! 31.♗a5 d4 32.c6 White has no direct threats and Black can even launch activity of his own with 32... h4!?

31. b5-b6 d5-d4

31...♕c6 32.♗d6 ♘e5 33.♘d4 ♕a4 34.♗xe5 ♗xe5 35.♖d1 is just as hopeless.

32. b6-b7 ♘g6-e5
33. ♘e2xd4 ♕a4xd4
34. ♕d2xd4 ♘e5-f3+
35. ♔g1-h1 ♗f6xd4
36. ♖e1-c1 ...

Here the trick hasn't worked, as White not only emerges with the exchange but also with the 'live' passed c-pawn.

36. ... e4-e3
37. f2xe3 ♗d4xe3
38. ♖c1-c3

1-0

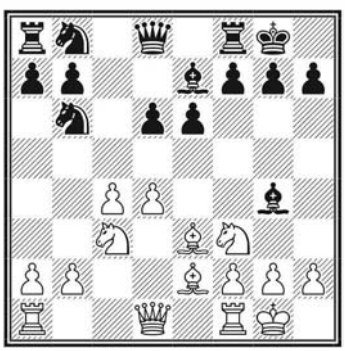
Variations with b2-b3, which account for most lines analyzed here, are harmless for Black. White's main plan, a queenside pawn storm, can only be carried out at the loss of a tempo.

Chapter 84.
6.0-0 ♗e7 7.c4 ♘b6 8.ed cd 9.♘c3

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 ♗c8-g4
5. ♗f1-e2 e7-e6
6. 0-0 ♗g8-e7
7. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
8. e5xd6 c7xd6
9. ♘b1-c3 0-0

The variation 9...♘c6 10.d5 ed 11.cd ♗xf3 12.♗xf3 ♘e5 13.♗e2 0-0 14.a4 a5 15.♘b5 ♖c8 16.♗e3 ♖e8 17.b3 is strategically better for White, while the variation 10...♗xf3 11.♗xf3 ♘e5 12.de fe 13.♗xb7 ♖b8 14.♗e4 ♘bxc4 15.f4 is tactically better for him. So Black gains nothing whatsoever from delaying castling.

10. ♗c1-e3 ...



The natural setup of the white pieces forces his opponent to take a big decision at this juncture.

10. ... ♘b8-c6

This is the most active reply, provoking White to play aggressively in the center. Swinging the knight over to f6 via d7 lacks ambition. For example, 10...♘8d7 11.b3 ♘f6 12.a4 ♘bd7 13.a5 d5 14.a6 b6 15.♗f4, as well as 12...a5 13.♖c1 d5 14.♘b5 ♘e8 15.♕d2 dc 16.bc ♗b4 17.♕a2 ♘c7 18.♖fd1 ♘xb5 19.ab ♘c8 (19...♕c7 is less timid) 20.h3 ♗f5 21.d5 ♕e7 22.♘d4 with an advantage (Oral – Cicak, Czech Republic 2004).

11...f5 is not popular, as the attack peters out while the holes remain. The continuation 12.♕d2 h6 13.♘e1 ♗xe2 14.♕xe2 ♗f6 15.♖d1 ♕e7 16.♕d2 ♖ad8 17.f4 g6 18.♘f3 ♗g7 19.♖fe1 ♘f6? 20.d5 (Koblencs – Mikenas, Riga 1954) is catastrophic for Black, but after 19...♕f7 he still faced a tough defensive mission.

10...d5 was played against the talented junior (and future world champion) by the faithful Alekhine Defense acolyte (Game 96).

11. d4-d5 ...

This is the principled move. 11.b3 is the main line in Chapter 83.

11. ... ♗g4xf3

Black as a rule prompts his opponent to make up his mind on the structure in the center.

Exchanges at Black's initiative are considered in Game 97.

12. ♗e2xf3 ...

If 12.gf?! ♘e5 13.b3 then White gets a pretty pawn chain on the left side of the board but ugly ruins on the right. After 13...♘g6 14.♕d2 e5 15.♖ae1 ♘d7 Black has a lasting advantage.

12. ... ♘c6-e5

13. d5xe6 ...

Ever since Bagirov's old games the assessment of 13.b3 has remained unchanged – White's position is slightly more pleasant. For example, 13...♘xf3+ 14.♕xf3 e5 15.♖fd1 f5 16.c5 e4 17.♕e2 dc 18.d6 ♗f6 19.♖ac1 (Loskutov – Kirillov, Novosibirsk 2001) 19... ♗g5 20.♗xg5 ♕xg5 21.♘b5 ♖ad8 22.♖xc5 a6 23.♘a3 ♖f6 24.♘c4 ♘d7 25.♖cd5, and the central passed pawn is firmly blocked.

13. ... f7xe6

After 13...♘xf3+ 14.♕xf3 fe 15.♕xb7 ♘xc4 16.♕e4 ♕c8 17.♖ac1 ♘xe3 18.♕xe3 ♕d7 19.♖fe1 e5 20.♖ed1 (Enjuto – Maeckelbergh, Zakopane 2000) White establishes an 'eternal' knight on d5, but the open nature of the position leaves Black counter-chances. After 15.♕e4!? ♕d7 16.♗xb6 ab 17.♖fe1 ♖f6 18.♖ad1 defending becomes unpleasant. 15.♕g4 is also good – we will come back to this position.

14. ♗f3-g4 ...

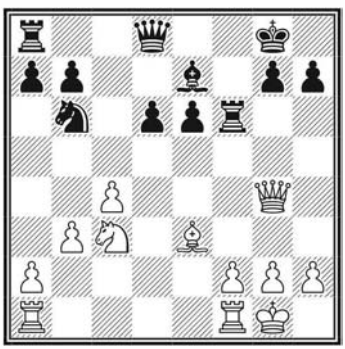
Taking on b7 unties Black's hands: 14.♗xb7 ♖b8 15.♗e4 ♘bxc4 (15...♘exc4? 16.♕h5! g6 17.♗xg6! hg 18.♕xg6+ ♔h8 19.♕h5+ ♔g8 20.♗h6) 16.♗xa7 ♖xb2 17.♕h5 g6 18.♕h3 ♕d7 19.♗d4 ♖d2 20.♖fd1 ♗f6 21.♖ab1 ♖xd1+ 22.♖xd1 ♕f7 23.♕g3 ♗g7 (Swati – Tillyaev, Mumbai 2014). The activity of the black pieces neutralizes the bishop pair and distant passed pawn.

14. ... ♖f8-f6

Black's defense of the king's pawn without first exchanging the bishop forces White to defend his c4 pawn with b2-b3. This is a useful but not critical move. After 14... ♘xg4 15.♕xg4 ♖f6 16.♖ae1 ♕c8 17.♗xb6 ab 18.♖e4 ♗f8 19.a3 ♖a5 20.♕e2 ♖af5 21.f3 ♖f4 22.♖d1 Neverov found himself under pressure against Kotsur (Dubai 2009).

15. b2-b3 ♘e5xg4

16. ♕e2xg4 ...

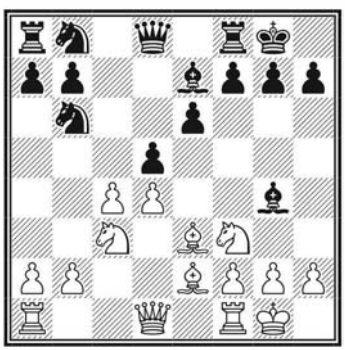


The stats here are murderous for Black: in the last 40 years he has lost all 11 games! After 16... ♘d7 17.♕e4 it's hard to defend the b-pawn (17...b6 18.♘b5 ♘c5

19.♗xc5 bc 20.♘c7!). In reply to 16...♖g6 it's best to aim at the e6 pawn from afar – 17.♕h3 ♘d7 18.f4 with the idea of f4-f5.

Game 96
A.Karpov – V.Bagirov
Riga 1970

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**♗c8-g4**
5.	**♗f1-e2**	**e7-e6**
6.	**0-0**	**♗f8-e7**
7.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
8.	**e5xd6**	**c7xd6**
9.	**♘b1-c3**	**0-0**
10.	**♗c1-e3**	**d6-d5**



Bagirov believes that it makes sense to fight for d5 before development has been completed. Many Alekhine devotees share this view, as d4-d5 is stronger than its reputation in the hands of the best computers.

11. c4-c5 ...

After 11.cd ♘xd5 12.♕b3 ♘xc3 13.bc ♕c7 White gets to play c3-c4 and the struggle will revolve around the correctness (or lack thereof) of the hanging pawns. It looks like Black is ready to meet this metamorphosis armed to the teeth.

11. ... ♗g4xf3

Retreating the knight to d7 or c8 should be ignored here, as White's pawn storm is gathering pace.

12. ♗e2xf3 ...

12.gf?! retains control over c4, but it's not worth voluntarily ruining the kingside pawn structure for that. In the game Tomes – V.Sergeev (Tatranske Zruby 2000) after 12...♘c8 13.f4 ♗f6 14.♕b3 b6 15.cb ♘xb6 16.♖ac1 ♘c6 17.♘b5 ♕d7 18.♕c3 ♖ac8 19.♕d2 ♘c4 20.♗xc4 dc 21.♖fd1 ♘e7 22.♘c3 ♕b7 23.♕c2 ♘f5 24.♖d2? ♘h4 the weakness of the light squares makes itself felt as the position opens up a little.

12. ... ♘b6-c4

13. ♗e3-c1 ...

13.♗f4 is also good, as it's a mistake to take the pawn: 13... ♘xb2?! 14.♕b1 or 14.♕b3 (14... ♘d3 15.♘xd5). After 13...♘c6 14.b3 ♘4a5 15.♕d2 b6 16.♘a4 ♗f6 17.♗e3 bc 18.♘xc5 ♖b8 19.♖ac1 (Gunnarsson – Almeida, Santa Clara 2002) it's hard for White to exploit his advantage on the queenside, in particular due to the weak d-pawn.

The game Vuelban – Hautala (Siena 2010) saw a change in

structure that is typical for this variation: 13.b3 ♘xe3 14.fe ♘c6 15.a3 b6 16.b4 bc 17.bc ♕a5 18.♕d3 ♗f6?! (18...♖ab8 would have maintained equality), but here White missed the tactic 19.♗xd5! ed? (19...♗xd4 20.ed ed 21.♖f5 is still not losing) 20.♖xf6! gf 21.♘xd5 ♕d8 22.♕f5.

13. ... ♘b8-c6

If 13...b6!? 14.b3 ♘a5 15.cb Black is advised to play 15...♕xb6 (which has yet to be tested in practice) with a queenside blockade and pressure on d4.

14. b2-b3 ♘c4-a5

15. ♗c1-e3 ...

Here and beyond we take into account commentary by Karpov from the pre-computer era. The recommendation 15.♗b2 doesn't promise much in view of 15...b6 16.♘a4 ♖b8 17.♗e2 b5 (17...bc 18.dc ♗f6 is also fine) 18.♘c3 b4 19.♘a4 ♗f6, then ♘c6-e7 and ♘a5-c6.

15. ... b7-b6

16. ♘c3-a4 ...

White needs to strengthen c5. Continuing something like 16.cb ♕xb6 17.♘a4 ♕b4 18.♕d3 ♖fd8 19.♖fd1 ♖ac8 20.♗d2 ♕b8 21.♗c3 ♘b7 22.♖ac1 ♘d6 23.♗b2 ♗f6 (Chadaev – Sek, Sochi 2006) is clearly to Black's advantage.

16. ... ♖a8-b8

Bagirov is his turn attempts to add the rook to the siege of the pivotal d-pawn. Let's also look at how the game Lengyel – Kahn (Budapest 2008) went: 16...b5 17.♘c3 a6 18.♖c1 ♗f6 19.♕d2 ♘e7 20.g4 g6 21.♗g2 ♗g7 22.f4 ♘ac6 23.♖fd1 ♖b8 24.♘e2 b4 25.♘g3 f5 26.g5 ♘a7 27.♗f1 ♘b5 28.♗xb5 ♖xb5. No blood has been shed and the position is blocked. Soon it will be impossible for either side to break through.

17. ♖a1-c1 b6xc5

18. ♘a4xc5 ♗e7-f6

If 18...♗xc5 19.dc (19.♖xc5 ♕b6) 19...♕c7 20.♕d2 ♖b4 then Black is willing to advance his central pawns. Now, however, Karpov takes measures against the rook's activation.

19. a2-a3 ♘c6-e7

20. ♗f3-e2 ♘e7-f5

21. b3-b4 ...

There is no improvement whatsoever in 21.♗f4 ♖b6 22.b4 ♘c4 23.♗xc4 dc 24.♖xc4 ♕d5 25.♖c1 ♗xd4 and Black comfortably regains the pawn (Sriram – Baburin, India 1999).

21. ... ♘a7-b5

It is useful to extend Karpov's variation 21...♘c4 22.♗xc4 dc 23.♖xc4 ♕d5 24.♕d3 ♖fd8 25.♘b3 ♘xd4 26.♗xd4 e5 to fully appreciate the position: 27.♘a5 ♖a8 28.♘c6 ♖e8 29.♘xe5 ♗xe5 30.♕c3. This is a technical position with an extra pawn, hence the exchange combination on the 25th move looks debatable.

22. ♗e3-f4 ♘b7-d6

23. ♗f4-e5 ♗f6xe5

24. d4xe5 ♘d6-b7

Black now has a defended passed pawn, but White has it under control and White's queenside pawn majority is worth more. Nevertheless, after 24...♘e4 25.♘b3 ♖c8 26.♗d3 ♕b6 (27. ♗xe4 de 28.♘c5 e3) Black could have counted on achieving equal chances.

25. ♘c5-b3 ♕d8-b6
26. ♗e2-d3 ♘f5-e7

Karpov considered this knight retreat to be the decisive mistake and suggests 26...a5 27.♗xf5 ef 28.♕d4 ♕xd4 29.♘xd4 ab 30.ab ♘d8. The 'four versus three' position that arises after 31.♘f5 ♖xb4 32.♘e7+ ♔h8 33.♘xd5 should lead to a draw.

27. ♕d1-g4 f7-f5

From the strategic point of view, selecting 27...h6 28.♕h4 ♘g6 29.♗xg6 hg is a major concession. However, the f-file leaves Black with some chances. Moreover, White's dangerous bishop has left the scene.

28. ♕g4-d4 ♘b7-d8

Bagirov's resistance could be improved on. He should have first played 28...♖fc8 to keep the rooks together.

29. b4-b5 g7-g5
30. a3-a4 ♘e7-g6
31. ♕d4-a1 ♕b6-b7
32. ♖f1-e1 ♕b7-g7
33. ♘b3-c5 ♖f8-f7
34. a4-a5 ♖f7-e7
35. ♘c5-a6 ♖b8-a8
36. ♗d3-f1 ♘d8-f7?

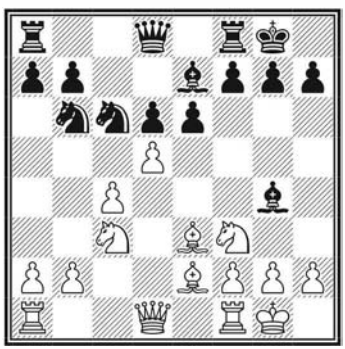
36...f4 or 36...g4 put up more resistance, as after the knight's invasion on c7 the battle is over.

37. ♘a6-c7 ♖a8-d8
38. ♖c1-c6 ♘g6-f8
39. b5-b6 a7xb6
40. a5-a6 ♘f7-h6
41. ♖e1-c1 ♘h6-g4
42. a6-a7 ♘g4xe5
43. ♖c6-c2 ♘e5-c4
44. a7-a8♕ ♖d8xa8
45. ♘c7xa8 b6-b5
46. ♖c2-a2

1-0

Game 97
P.Leko – A.Jussupow
Dortmund 1994

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 ♗c8-g4
5. ♗f1-e2 e7-e6
6. 0-0 ♗f8-e7
7. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
8. ♘b1-c3 0-0
9. ♗c1-e3 ♘b8-c6
10. e5xd6 c7xd6
11. d4-d5 ...



11. ... e6xd5

12. ♘c3xd5 ...

White could have kept the knight in the center by first exchanging with 12.♗xb6 ♕xb6. After 13.♘xd5 ♕xb2 White has the option to repeat moves with ♖a1-b1-a1, but what else? If 14.♕d3 ♗xf3 15.♘xe7+ ♘xe7 16.♗f3 ♖ad8 17.♖ab1 ♕xa2 18.♖xb7 ♘g6 (Pinkas – Sygulski, Czestochowa 1981) the knight heads for e5 and equality is maintained.

Capturing with 12.cd has been played in order to saddle Black with a 'bad' knight on c6. But if Black treads carefully then he can improve his knight and has nothing to worry about: 12...♗xf3 13.♗xf3 ♘e5 14.♗d4 ♗f6 15.♗e2 ♘g6 16.♖c1 ♖c8 17.g3 ♖e8 18.♗b5 ♗xd4 19.♕xd4 ♖e7 20.f4 ♘f8 21.a4 a5 22.♖ce1 ♘bd7 23.♖e3 ♖xe3 24.♕xe3 ♘c5 25.♖e1 ♘fd7 (Christiansen – Soppe, Manila 1992) or 14.♗e2 ♘ec4 15.♗d4 ♗f6 16.b3 ♗xd4 17.♕xd4 ♘e5 18.f4 ♘ed7 19.♖ac1 ♕f6 20.♕xf6 ♘xf6 21.♗f3 ♖fc8 22.♘b5 ♘e8 23.a4 a6 24.♘d4 ♖xc1 25.♖xc1 ♔f8 26.a5 ♖c8 27.♖c2 ♖xc2 28.♘xc2 ♘d7 (S.Kasparov – Neverov, Lipetsk 2010).

12. ... ♘f6xd5

13. c4xd5 ...

Leko veers from the main line 13.♕xd5, which by then had already acquired a wealth of both practical games and theory. The evaluation hasn't changed – a slight advantage for White. After 13...♗e6 14.♕d2 d5 15.c5 ♖c8 16.b4 ♗f6 17.♘d4 b6 18.♖ac1 ♘xd4 19.♗xd4 ♗xd4 20.♕xd4 bc 21.♖xc5 ♖xc5 22.♕xc5 ♕b6 23.♕xb6 ab 24.a4 ♖a8 25.♖a1 ♔f8 Velicka held the endgame against Oral (Trinec 1999). Some correspondence games have seen 14.♕b5!? ♕c7 15.♘d4 ♘xd4 16.♗xd4 a6 17.♕b3 ♖ac8 – Black has not given up hope of playing d6-d5.

The continuation 13...♗f6 14.♕d2 ♕a5 15.♖fd1 ♖fd8 16.h3 ♗e6 17.♘d4 ♕xd2 18.♗xd2 ♗xd4 19.♗xd4 ♘xd4 20.♖xd4 ♔f8 21.♖ad1 ♔e7 22.f4 ♖ac8 23.b3 ♖c5 24.g4 g6 25.♔f2 a5 26.a4 led to a long advantage for White in the endgame (A.Filippov – Tiviakov, Tashkent 2014). Black is recommended to play 19...d5 20.c5 ♖ac8, but White should have exchanged the active enemy bishop earlier with the help of 17.♗g5.

13. ... ♗g4xf3

Jussupow avoids a simple trap: 13...♘e5? 14.♘xe5 ♗xe2 15.♘xf7! ♗xd1 16.♘xd8 ♗e2 17.♖fe1 ♗xd8 18.♖xe2 with an extra pawn.

14. ♗e2xf3 ♘c6-e5

15. ♗f3-e2 f7-f5!

This sensible idea came from Vlastimil Hort. Black gains space and threatens to tie up White with f5-f4.

16. ♕d1-d2 ...

After 16.f4 ♘d7 17.♕b3 ♗f6 18.♗f3 ♖e8 19.♖fe1 ♕a5 20.♔f1 ♘b6 (Short – Hort, Dortmund 1986) the black pieces are set up so

much better that the draw offer was a real gift for the English GM.

16. ... ♗e7-f6
17. ♖a1-c1 ♕d8-e7

He should probably have moved his queen to d7 (to defend the b7 and d6 pawns) and then leave her there for some time.

18. ♖f1-e1 ♕e7-f7
19. ♕d2-b4! ♘e5-g4

The knight's sortie is obviously stronger than taking the pawn (19... ♕xd5? 20.f4 ♘f7 21.♗c4 ♕e4 22.♗f2! and the queen cannot be saved), but is inferior to defending with 19...♖fd8.

20. ♗e2xg4 ...

Leko's commentary in Chess Informant didn't include the variation 20.♗f4 ♖fd8 21.♗xd6 a5 22.♕f4 ♗xb2 23.♖c7 ♕g6 24.♖xb7 ♕xd6 25.♕xd6 ♖xd6 26.♖xb2, after which White is a full pawn ahead in the endgame.

20. ... f5xg4
21. ♖c1-d1 ...

21.♕xd6 ♖ad8 22.♕e6 ♖xd5 23.♕xf7+ ♖xf7 24.♗xa7 ♗xb2 (Leko) does indeed lead to equality, but after 22.♕b4 ♕xd5 23.b3 the soldier of fortune on g4 will make Black work very hard to equalize.

21. ... ♗f6-e5
22. ♕d4xg4 ♗f6xb2
23. ♕g4-e6 ♗b2-a3!

A great move! The queens leave the board on Black's terms, in other words where White's advantage on the kingside is limited to one pawn.

24. g2-g3 b7-b6
25. ♖d1-d3 ♗a3-b4
26. ♖e1-b1 ♗b4-c5
27. a2-a4 ♖a8-e8
28. ♕e6xf7+ ♖f8xf7
29. a4-a5 ♖f7-f3

29...♗xe3 30.♖xe3 ♖xe3 31.fe ba 32.♖b8+ ♖f8 33.♖b7 ♖f7 (Leko) draws, while 33...♖f5 34.♖b5 ♖f3 35.♖xa5 ♖xe3 36.♖a6 ♖xd3 37.♖d6 a5 fails to add any intrigue.

30. a5xb6 ♗c5xb6
31. ♔g1-g2 ♖e8-f8
32. ♖b1-b2 h7-h5
½ - ½

There is no doubt that Black needs to hurry up with d6-d5 and to be wary of d4-d5 with an attack on the knight on c6. In that case, playing along the lines of Leko – Jussupow will be the best approach.

Chapter 85. 6. 0-0 ♗e7 7. c4 ♘b6 8. ♘c3

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 ♗c8-g4
5. ♗f1-e2 e7-e6
6. 0-0 ♗f8-e7
7. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
8. ♘b1-c3 ...



White has maintained tension in the center, leaving Black the opportunity to exchange on e5. Taking right now doesn't reduce Black's problems: 8...de 9.♘xe5 ♗xe2 10.♕xe2 0-0 (10...♕xd4?! 11.♖d1 ♕c5 12.b4! ♕xb4 13.♘b5) 11.♖d1 ♘8d7 12.♖d3 ♘f6 13.♗g5 ♘bd7 14.♖ad1 ♖e8 15.♖h3 c6 16.♕d3 ♘f8 17.♕f3 ♖c8 18.♗xf6 ♗xf6 19.♘e4 ♖c7 20.c5 (Timoscenko – Doda, Polanica Zdroj 1978). But neither does taking the pawn later.

8. ... 0-0

9. ♗c1-e3 d6-d5

Among the various possible continuations here, advancing the rook pawn is played inexplicably often. 9...a6 prevents the relatively pointless move ♘c3-b5 and has the additional idea of continuing 10...♗xf3 11.♗xf3 ♘xc4, which is, however, easily dealt with by White. A difficult endgame for Black arose in the game Palac – Sale (Rijeka 2009): 10.♕b3 ♘8d7 11.ed cd 12.a4 ♗xf3 13.♗xf3 ♕c7 14.c5 dc 15.a5 ♘c8 16.♕xb7 ♕xb7 17.♗xb7 ♖a7 18.♗f3 cd 19.♗xd4 ♗c5 20.♗xc5 ♘xc5 21.b4 ♘b3 22.♖ad1 ♖c7 23.♖d3. After 10...de 11.♘xe5 ♗xe2 12.♘xe2 ♘8d7 it would be a mistake to take on b7 with the queen (13.c5 ♘xe5 14.de ♘d5 15.♕xb7? ♘xe3 16.fe ♗c5), all the more so, given that White is better if both players simply aim to consolidate.

Moving the rook pawn two moves 9...a5 brakes the enemy attack after 10.b3 d5 11.c5 ♘6d7 or 11...♘c8, but the vulnerability of the b7 square makes itself felt here, too. For example, 10.ed cd 11.♕b3 ♘8d7 12.h3 ♗xf3 13.♕xf3 ♕c7 14.♗e2 ♖fc8 15.♖fc1 ♕d8 16.♘b5 a4 17.♕d1 ♘f6 18.b3 ♘e8 19.♘c3 ab 20.♕xb3 ♖ab8 21.d5 with an advantage (Shchekachev – Bauer, France 2003). If 11...a4 12.♕b5 ♕c7 13.d5 ♘8d7 14.♖ac1 ♗xf3 15.♗xf3 then it's a bad idea to capture on c4 (15...♘xc4? 16.♘xa4 or 15...♕xc4?! 16.de fe 17.♗xb6 ♕xb5 18.♘xb5 ♘xb6 19.♖c7), and Black should instead look for counter-chances with the help of 15...e5 16.♗e2 f5.

If 9...♘8d7 it's hard for Black to play actively. The game might continue 10.ed cd 11.b3 ♖c8 12.♕d2 ♘f6 13.♖fd1 h6 14.a4 a5 15.♘b5 ♘bd7 16.h3 ♗xf3 17.♗xf3 d5 18.♖ac1 (Stripunsky – Blair, USA 2001). Unusually, he shouldn't reduce pressure in the c4-d5 cluster.

9...♘c6, as we know from

Chapter 84, is better for White after 10.ed cd 11.d5.

10. c4-c5 ...

If instead White takes in the center, his territorial advantage and backward d4 pawn cancel each other out. Tseshkovsky and Palatnik (Irkutsk 1984) didn't maintain the fighting spirit for long: 10.cd ♘xd5 11.♕b3 ♘b6 12.h3 ♗xf3 13.♗xf3 c6 14.a4 a5 15.♘a2 ♕c7 16.♖fc1 ♘a6 17.♗e4 ♖fd8 18.♕c2 g6 19.♘c3 ♘b4, and peace prevailed.

10. ... ♗g4xf3

This is played either to win back the c4 square for his knight or to double his opponent's pawns. After 10...♘6d7?! 11.b4 f6 12.ef ♗xf6 13.♕d2 ♔h8?! 14.♘g5 ♗xe2 15.♘xe6 ♕e7 16.♘xf8 ♗xf1 17.♘xd7 ♕xd7 18.♖xf1 (Timoscenko – Solozhenkin, Gdynia 1989) the series of exchanges left Black a pawn down without compensation. 13...♗f5 enables him to avoid material losses, but is no counter to White's play on the queenside.

11. g2xf3 ...

In the variation 11.♗xf3 ♘c4 12.♗f4 b6 13.b3 ♘a5 14.b4 ♘c4 15.♗e2 ♘c6 16.b5 ♘6a5 17.c6 ♗a3 18.♕c2 a6 (Nanu – Velicka, Spain 2005) Black has achieved his aims on the queenside, even though it's supposed to be White's fiefdom. White should probably have defended b2 via 12.♗c1 with a continuation along the lines of 12...b6 13.♗e2 ♘c6 14.cb cb 15.b3 ♘4a5 16.♗d3 ♖c8 17.♘e2 ♘b4 18.♗b1 – the advantage of the bishop pair is immaterial given the blocked center.

11. ... ♘b6-c8

If Black later moves his bishop from e7, the knight is ready to replace it, via f5. After 11...♘6d7 the knight has no good prospects and Black faces a tough defense, despite some nonsense that Houdini has dreamed up.

12. ♔g1-h1 ...

It makes sense to leave the f4 square free, although 12.f4 is played the most often (Game 98).

12. ... ♔g8-h8

13. ♖f1-g1 ♘b8-c6

After 13...♕d7 14.♕f1 g6 15.♕h3 ♖e8 16.♗d3 ♗d8 17.♖g4 ♘c6 18.♖g4 b6 19.♘e2 Nikolenko accepted Bratchenko's resignation (Korolev 2000) in view of ♘e2-f4 followed by the winning bishop sacrifice on g6.

The setup with ♕d1-f1-h3, ♗e2-d3, doubled rooks on the g-file, and ♘c3-e2-f4 aiming tactically at g6, is truly dangerous for Black. Adding the moves h2-h3 and ♗g4-h5 deprives the queen of h3 (as Bagirov noted).

14. f3-f4 ...

The pawn charge ensures that Black will not be left in peace.

14. ... ♗e7xc5?!

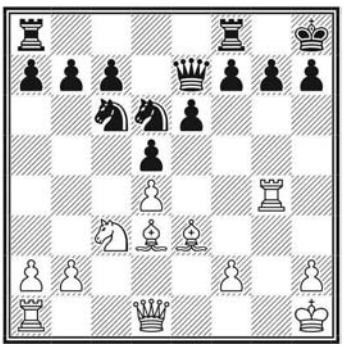
This was played counting on the game continuing 15.dc d4 16.♘b5 de 17.♕xd8 ♘xd8 18.fe ♘e7, which is fine for Black. However,

winning the pawn doesn't help to defend the kingside and he should have played as in the game Kilgus – V.Sergeev (Zalakaros 2002): 14...♗h4 15.f5 ♘8e7 16.♗d2 ♘xf5 17.♗xf5 ef 18.♕f3 ♘e7 19.♕h5 ♘g8 20.♕xf5 g6 21.♕h3 c6, and a draw was agreed a couple of moves later.

15. f4-f5! ♗**c5-e7**

He needs to take the f6 square under control. 15...♗b4? 16.♖xg7! ♔xg7 17.f6+ ♔h8 18.♗d3 ♖g8 19.♗xh7! ends the game.

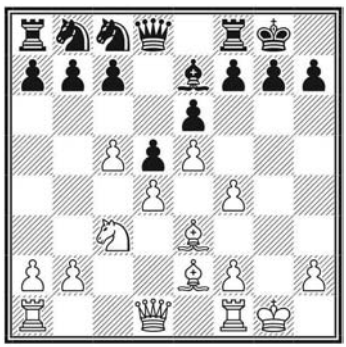
16. f5-f6 ♗**e7xf6**
17,e5xf6 ♕**d8xf6**
18. ♖**g1-g4** ♕**f6-e7**
19. ♗**e2-d3** ♘**c8-d6**



Korneev versus V.Bagirov (Moscow 1990) continued 20.♕f3, and he eventually got to the enemy king. With the help of 20.♗xh7! ♔xh7 21.♖xg7+! ♔xg7 22.♕g4+ ♔h8 23.♕h3+ ♔g7 24.♕h6+ or 20...g6 21.♗g5 f6 22.♗xg6 fg 23.♖h4+! he could have met his objective much earlier.

Game 98
M.Kobalia – T.Nalbandian
Moscow 1999

1. e2-e4 ♘**g8-f6**
2. e4-e5 ♘**f6-d5**
3. d2-d4 **d7-d6**
4. ♘**g1-f3** ♗**c8-g4**
5. ♗**f1-e2** **e7-e6**
6. 0-0 ♗**f8-e7**
7. c2-c4 ♘**d5-b6**
8. ♘**b1-c3** **0-0**
9. ♗**c1-e3** **d6-d5**
10. c4-c5 ♗**g4xf3**
11. g2xf3 ♘**b6-c8**
12. f3-f4 **...**



12. ... ♗**e7-h4**

Freeing up the e7 square for the knight proved unnecessary in the game. However, it is useful in a number of variations (for example, 13.f5 ♘e7 14.♗d3 ♘xf5 15.♗xf5 ef 16.♕f3 ♕c8 17.♘xd5 ♘c6). 12...g6?! doesn't prevent f4-f5 – on the contrary in fact. After 13.f5! ef 14.♗h6 ♖e8 it's a bad idea to take on d5 in view of 15...♘c6. However, 15.♕b3 leaves Black in a cul-de-

sac. In the variation 13...gf 14.♗h6 ♖e8 15.♔h1 ♔h8 16.♖g1 ♗f8 17.♕d2 ♘e7 18.♗h5 ♘g6 19.♗xg6 fg 20.♗xf8 ♖xf8 21.♖xg6! the final showdown begins on the kingside.

If 12...f5 then it's only possible to execute f4-f5 by taking en passant: 13.ef ♖xf6 14.♔h1 c6 15.♖g1 ♘d7 16.♗d3 ♘f8 17.♕g4 ♖f7 18.♘e2 ♗f6 19.f5 ef 20.♗xf5 ♘e7 21.♗d3 ♕d7 22.♕xd7 ♘xd7 22.b4 b6 (Boudre – Dovzik, Massy 1992). Black has successfully fought off the attack and the players agreed a draw. In a blocked position (without e5xf6) White has slightly better chances on the queenside, but with nothing to hold onto it's hard for him to make inroads – 13.b4 ♖f7 14.♔h1 ♘d7 15.♖g1 ♘f8 16.♖b1 g6 17.♗f3 ♖g7 18.♕b3 c6?! 19.b5 ♗h4 20 bc bc 21.♕a4 (Yudasin – Nilsson, USA 2002).

Lev Alburt has willingly played 12...♘c6 (albeit, without success). 13.f5 ef 14.♗f3 ♗g5 15.♘xd5 f4! (Alburt's idea) leads to a complicated game with approximately equal chances for both sides after 16.♗xf4 ♗xf4 17.♘xf4 ♘8e7 18.♘e2 ♕d7 or 16.♘xf4 ♗xf4 17.♗xf4 ♕xd4 18.♗xc6 ♕xf4 19.♕f3 ♕g5+ 20.♕g2 ♕xe5 21.♗xb7 ♖b8. Glek versus Majer (Bad Zwesten 1997) held back from this pawn charge but also failed to achieve anything significant: 13.♗d3 g6 14.♔h1 ♔h8 15.♕g4 ♘b4 (it was more accurate to play 15...b6!? immediately, in order to prevent his opponent from creating a pawn chain) 16.♗b1 b6 17.a3 ♘c6 18.b4 bc 19.dc f5 20.♕h3 ♖g8 21.♗a2 ♗f8 22.♖ad1 ♘8e7 23.b5 ♘a5.

13. ♗e2-d3 g7-g6

Here, capturing en passant is the right response to 13...f5. After 14.ef ♗xf6 the f4-f5 charge is effective, while if 14...g6?! 15.♕g4 ♕xf6 then the bishop unexpectedly gets trapped with 16.♔g2! and 17.♔h3!

14. f4-f5!? ...

Kobalia gradually implements the idea of his 12th move. Penttinen outplayed Pessi (Jyvaskyla 1994) in a battle of manoeuvres: 14.♕g4 ♔h8 15.♔h1 ♘c6 16.a3 f5 17.ef ♕xf6 18.♘e2 ♘8e7 19.♘g1! ♘f5 20.♘f3 ♘ce7 21.b4 ♖g8 22.♗d2 ♖g7 23.♖ae1. The manoeuvre ♘c3-e2-g1-f3 is especially subtle and it portrays the f7-f5 advance in a bad light.

14. ... e6xf5

15. ♕d1-f3 c7-c6

15...♘c6!? is interesting. Black replies ♘c8-e7 to any capture and then blockades on d5.

16. ♔g1-h1 ♔g8-h8

The need to retreat is illustrated by the variations 16...f6 17. ♗xf5! gf? 18. ♗h6 ♖f7 19. ♖g1+ ♔h8 20. e6 ♖c7 21. ♕xf5 (♗lack is forced to give up the bishop) and 17...fe 18. e6+ ♔h8 19. ♕h3 ♘a6 20. de (with an obvious initiative after winning back the pawn).

17. ♖f1-g1 ♘b8-a6

The sacrifice on f5 appears in almost all lines. For example, 17...

♘e7 18.♕h3 ♘g6 19.♗xf5! gf 20.♕g2 ♗f6 21.ef ♕xf6 22.♘e2 and the knight joins the attack.

18. ♗d3xf5! ♘c8-e7
19. ♗f5-c2 ♘e7-g8
20. ♕f3-h3 ♘a6-c7

A strong pawn center guarantees the successful storm of Black's kingside bastions. 20...b6 21.cb ab breaks down one part of the citadel, which doesn't at all impact the assessment of the position.

21. ♖g1-g4 ♗h4-e7
22. ♖a1-g1 ♕d8-d7
23. f2-f4 ♖a8-e8
24. f4-f5 ♗e7-d8
25. ♘c3-e2 ...

It's hard to imagine the Moscow Grandmaster not finding the line 25.fg fg 26.♗xg6! ♖e7 27.♗f5! ♕xf5 28.♖xg8+. Most probably, he threw his last sleeping piece into battle without a moment's thought.

25. ... b7-b6
26. ♘e2-f4 g6-g5



27. ♕h3xh7+!! ♔h8xh7
28. f5-f6+ ♔h7-h6
29. ♖g4-h4+! g5xh4
30. ♘f4-e6+ ♔h6-h5
31. ♗c2-d1#

Capturing g2xf3, which is unacceptable in most lines of the Alekhine Defense, promises attacking prospects in this particular pawn structure.

Chapter 86. 6. 0-0 ♗e7 7. h3 ♗h5 8. c4 ♘b6 9. ed cd 10. ♘c3

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 ♗c8-g4
5. ♗f1-e2 e7-e6
6. 0-0 ♗f8-e7
7. h2-h3 ♗g4-h5
8. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
9. e5xd6 c7xd6
10. ♘b1-c3 0-0



We now continue the analysis begun in Chapter 84 with the addition of h2-h3 and ♗g4-h5. These lines are especially similar if Black soon chooses to capture on f3.

11. ♗c1-e3 ...

Unlike the Chebanenko – Bologan variation reviewed in Chapter 82, changing the structure with 11.d5 e5 can hardly be recommended. White has already castled, so he no longer has the g2-g4 ace up his sleeve. After 12.a4 a5 13.b3 ♘a6 14.♗a3 ♘d7 15.♘e1 ♗xe2 16.♕xe2 ♘dc5 17.♖b1 f5 18.♘b5 ♗f6 19.♘d3 b6 20.♘xc5 bc 21.♗b2 ♕d7 22.♖be1 ♘b4 (Kovchan – Chigladze, Istanbul 2006), despite Houdini's preference for his position, White needs to deal with the e5-f5 pair and find a way to equalize.

In response to 11.♗f4 Black most often plays 11...a6. The visible reason is to avoid worrying about the ♘c3-b5 sortie after 12.♖c1 d5 13.c5 ♘6d7. But the hidden reason is to free up the square for the rook in the line 12.♖c1 ♗xf3 13.♗xf3 ♘xc4 14.♗xb7 ♖a7 15.♗f3 d5 16.b3 ♘b6 (it's also fine to retreat the knight via a5 and c6) 17.♗e2 ♕d7 18.♗d3 ♘c6 with approximate equality (Szieberth – Zilberman, Oberwart 1998).

11.b3 is seen in Game 99.

11. ... ♘b8-c6

For an instructive example of 11... ♘8d7 see the game Iordachescu – Itkis (Budapest 1997): 12.b3 ♖c8 13.♕d2 ♘f6 14.♖fd1 ♗g6 15.a4 a6 16.d5!? (played when White is able to establish a piece on d5) 16...ed 17.a5 ♘bd7 18.♘xd5 ♘xd5 19.♕xd5 ♕c7 20.♗d3 ♕c6 21.♗xg6 hg 22.♕d2 ♘c5 23.♖ab1 ♘e4 24.♕d3 ♗f6 25.♘d4 ♕e8 26.♘e3. White's chances are preferable. The white knight heads for d5 via f4, whereas the black knight can be chased away at any time with f2-f3.

In response to 11...d5 Godena decided to surprise V.Bagirov (Debrecen 1992) by exchanging in the center. The game continued 12.cd ♘xd5 13.♕b3 ♘xe3 14.fe ♕b6 15.♕xb6 ab 16.g4 ♗g6 17.♘e5 ♗f6 18.♘xg6 hg 19.♗f3 ♘c6 20.♖fc1 ♗g5 21.♔f2 e5!? 22.d5 ♘b4 23.♔e2 f5 24.a3 ♘a6 25.ef gf with equality – Black exploited the advance g2-g4 as something to hang on to for his counterattack.

Unlike in the variations from Game 95, the position of the pawn on h3 isn't an important factor after 12.c5 ♗xf3 13.♗xf3 ♘c4. Let's look at a relatively recent and active fragment: 14.♗f4 ♘c6 15.b3 ♘4a5 16.♖c1 ♗f6 17.♘e2 b6 18.♕d2 bc 19.dc ♘e5 20.♗xe5 (or 20.♘d4 ♘ec6 – White is unable to retain control over the important central square) 20...♗xe5 21.b4 ♘c6 22.b5 ♕a5 (22...♘a5!? 23.♕b4 ♖b8) 23.♕d3 ♘e7 24.♕e3 ♗f6 25.♕b3 ♖ab8 26.a4 ♖fc8, and the pawns don't create any threats against Black (Zhang Zhong – Megaranto, China 2012).

12. d4-d5 e6xd5

The stats of the continuation 12...♗xf3 13.♗xf3 ♘e5 14.de fe (14...♘xf3+ 14.♕xf3 fe 15.♕g4 leads to the same position) 15.♗g4 ♘xg4 16.♕xg4 ♖f6 are hardly better than their analogues from Chapter 84 – only a 17% score from 21 games in the Megabase. The central pawn pair are under attack from all sides, as in the case with 17.♖ad1 e5? 18.c5 ♘c8 19.f4 ♗g6 20.♕f3 ♕c7 21.f5 ♖f6 22.♘d5 (Klundt – Bergmann, Berlin 2009). Losic held out for slightly longer against Golubovic (Dubrovnik 2008): 17...♖g6 18.♕e4 ♕c7 19.b3 a6 20.♘e2 e5 21.♗xb6 ab 22.♘c3 ♕c6 23.♘d5 ♗f8?! (as becomes evident from the continuation, 23...♗f6 24.f4 ♖e8 was stronger) 24.f4 ef?! 25.♖ae1 ♖d8 26.♕xf4 ♕c8 27.♕f7+ ♔h8 28.♖e3! ♖g5 29.♖ef3 – the bishop cannot be either hidden or defended.

13. ♘c3xd5 ...

Black gains very active pieces in the variation 13.cd ♗xf3 14.♗xf3 ♘e5 15.♗e4 f5 16.♗c2 f4 17.♗d4 ♘bd7 (in order to avoid capturing with the pawn in the event of an exchange on e5) 18.♕b1 g6 19.♖e1 ♗f6 20.♕d1 f3 21.g3 (A.Tate – H.Kristensen, Denmark 1992) 21... ♘c5 22.♔h2 ♖c8.

13. ... ♘b6xd5

The series of exchanges 13... ♗xf3 14.♗xb6 ab 15.♗xf3 ♗f6 16.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 fails to improve Black's unpromising position, and 17.♕d2 ♖fd8 18.♗d5 ♖d7 19.♖fe1 ♔f8 20.a3 ♖c8 21.♖e3 g6 22.♖ce1 ♔g7 23.♖e4! h6 24.♖1e3 (Adler – Bondar, Saint Paul 2000) made his problems even worse.

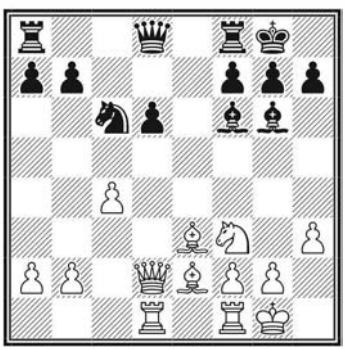
14. ♕d1xd5 ♗h5-g6

The bishop is under attack and heads back. The stats here are depressing for Black too – 16% from 16 games.

15. ♕d5-d2 ♗e7-f6

Leventic and Mrdja (Croatia 2013) continued 15...♖c8 16.♖ac1 ♕c7 17.b4 ♖fd8 18.♖fd1 h6 19.♕b2 b6 20.♗f4 ♗f6 21.♕a3. White pressurizes the d6 pawn, but the imposing pair of black bishops reduces White's advantage to a minimum.

16. ♖a1-d1 ...



After 16...♕c8 17. ♘d4 ♘xd4 18. ♗xd4 ♗xd4 19. ♕xd4 ♖d8 20. ♗f3 ♕c7 21. ♖d2 ♖d7 22. ♖fd1 ♖ad8 23. c5 d5 24. b4 ♗f5 25. ♕e3 ♖e7 26. ♕c3 ♖de8 27. ♖xd5 in the game ♖amesh – Singh (Kolkata 2002) White won a pawn and the game. Anastasian versus Aronian

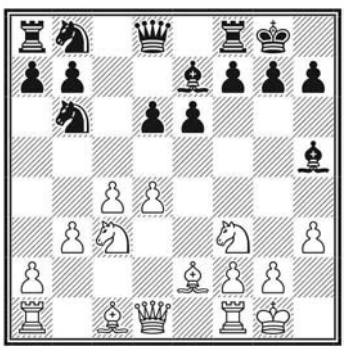
(Yerevan 2000) defended with more skill: 16...♖e8 17. b3 a5 18. a3 ♕c8 19. ♘e1 (19. ♕xd6 ♗c2) 19... ♘e5, and 20. ♕xd6 is met by an attack on the pawn chain 20... a4! It looks like adding h2-h3 and ♗g4-h5 doesn't make as much difference as is generally believed.

Game 99

Yu.Kryvoruchko – N.Spiridonov

Guingamp 2007

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**♗c8-g4**
5.	**♗f1-e2**	**e7-e6**
6.	**h2-h3**	**♗g4-h5**
7.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
8.	**e5xd6**	**c7xd6**
9.	**♘b1-c3**	**♗f8-e7**
10.	**0-0**	**0-0**
11.	**b2-b3**	**...**



The pawn prevents the knight from settling on c4 and we analyze the differences between this line and the main line of Chapter 83.

11. ... ♘b8-c6

After 11...d5 12.c5 ♗xf3 13.♗xf3 ♘c8 14.b4 a6 15.♗e3 ♘c6 16.a3 ♗f6 17.b5 ab 18.♘xb5 ♘8e7 19.♖b1 b6 20.cb ♕xb6 21.♕d3 ♕a6 22.♖fd1 ♖ab8 23.♗e2 ♘f5 Klima in his game against Petenyi (Frydek Mistek 2010) set up his pieces actively, helped by the breaking of the pawn chain with b4-b5. In response to 12...♘c8 it is worth looking at 13.♘e5!? (which is similar to the game Hunt – V.Sergeev from Chapter 83), but this move hasn't been tested enough in practice. Por versus Pirau (Budapest 2001) played quite aggressively, which is quite unusual for this variation: 13.b4 ♘c6 14.b5 ♘a5 15.g4 ♗g6 16.♘e5 ♘f6 17.f4 ♗xe5 18.fe ♘c4 19.♕a4. White has opened up his kingside too much and 19...♕h4 20.♔g2 h5 guarantees Black counterplay.

The fragment Hovhannisyan – Chigladze (Batumi 2003) is also interesting: 13.b4 a6 14.a4 ♘c6 15.♖b1 ♗f6 16.b5 ab 17.ab ♘a5 18.♗f4 ♘c4 19.b6 ♗xf3 20.♗xf3 ♘e7 21.♘b5 ♘a3 22.♘xa3 ♖xa3 23.♗d6 ♕d7 24.♗xe7 ♗xe7 25.♗e2 ♕a4 26.♖a1 ♖a8 27.♕xa4 ♖3xa4 28.♖xa4 ♖xa4 29.♖b1 ♖a8 – creating a passed pawn with the help of c5-c6 fails to bring real gains, partially due to the opposite-colored bishops. Further, 19.g4 ♗g6 20.♖a1 ♖xa1 21.♕xa1 strengthens White's play and Black should not ignore the earlier exchange on f3.

12. ♗c1-e3 ...

The following exclusive variation is quite interesting: 12.d5 ed 13.♘xd5 ♘xd5 14.♕xd5(?!) ♗f6 15.♕xh5 (if 15.♖b1? then 15... ♗f6, therefore there is no choice) 15...♗xa1 16.♘g5 h6 17.♗d3 ♘e5?! 18.♗h7+ ♔h8 (Hadraba – Kopicka, Czech Republic 1998) 19.♗f5! ♗b2! (otherwise, after 20.♘e4 the sacrifice on h6 is left hanging) 20.♘xf7+ ♖xf7 21.♗xb2 with the initiative for the exchange. However, there is no compensation after 17...♕e8 18.♘f3 f5 19.♕xe8 ♖axe8, hence in response to d5 it is still better to capture with the pawn.

12. ... d6-d5

13. c4-c5 ♘b6-c8

The game Zhang Zhong – Elbaba (Istanbul 2012) continued 13...♘d7 14.b4 ♘xb4 15.♕b3 ♗xf3 16.♗xf3 ♘c6 17.♕xb7 ♘a5 18.♕b5 ♘b8 19.♗f4 ♘bc6 20.♖fd1 ♗f6 21.♕a4 ♕d7 22.♗e2 a6 23.♖ab1 ♖a7 24.♗e3, and Black's defense is finding it hard to cope. He should have probably made a better effort to exchange queens: 15...a5 16.a3 ♘c6 17.♕xb7 ♕c8 18.♕xc8 ♖fxc8 19.g4 ♗g6 20.♗b5 ♗f6. However, the chasing of the bishop was actually useful for White here.

14. ♖a1- b1 ...

Davydov versus Vasiukov (Italy 2006) undertook an exchange operation with 14.♘e5 ♘xe5 15.♗xh5. The kingside pawn attack failed to bring results: 15...♘c6 16.f4 ♗f6 17.♗e2 ♘8e7 18.g4 h6 (18...g6 is even stronger) 19.♕d2 g6 20.♖ad1 b6 21.♘a4 bc 22.♘xc5 a5 23.♔g2 ♕d6, after which neither king looks safe.

14. ... ♗e7-f6

15. b3-b4 a7-a6

16. a2-a4 ♗h5-g6

Spiridonov avoids swapping the bishop in order to attack the light squares in the enemy camp. After 16...♗xf3 17.♗xf3 ♘8e7 only a few games have been played. Smyslov came up against problems in his game against Shabalov (Tilburg 1993) after 18.b5 ab 19.ab ♘a5 20.♗e2 ♘f5 21.♗d3?! ♘xd4 22.♗xd4 ♗xd4 23.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 24.♕xd4 ♕f6 25.♕d3+ ♔g8 26.♖fc1 ♘c4. It was better to keep the knight on the edge of the board with 21.♖b4!? (played by Godena), and then 21...♘xe3 22.fe ♗h4 highlighted all the cons of h2-h3.

17. ♖b1-b2 h7-h6

18. b4-b5 ♘c6-a5

It's not a good idea to open up the rook file here. After 18...ab 19.ab ♘8e7 it's not easy for Black to restore communications on his back rank, while after 19...♘a5 20.♖a2 ♘e7 21.♗f4 the d-pawn's weakness is less palpable and it's easier for White to dispute the open line.

19. ♗e3-f4 ...

In order to meet the exchange 19...♘c4 20.♗xc4 dc with moving the bishop to e5. 19.ba allows the non-standard variation 19...b6!? 20.cb ♘xb6 21.♗b5 ♘bc4 22.♖a2 ♕b6 with an unclear position.

19. ... ♘c8-e7
20. ♘f3-e5 ♗f6xe5
21. ♗f4xe5 ♖f8-e8
22. ♖f1-e1 ♕d8-d7
23. ♕d1-d2 ...

Kryvoruchko ignores the possible invasion after 23.ba!? ba 24.♖b6, and his opponent changes the structure himself, which is probably overly risky.

23. ... ♘a5-c4
24. ♗e2xc4 d5xc4
25. c5-c6 b7xc6
26. b5-b6 f7-f6
27. b6-b7 f6xe5
28. b7xa8♕ ♖e8xa8
29. ♖e1xe5 ...

White has won the exchange, but here and further on his technique lets him down. 29.de ♘d5 30.♕d4 ♗d3 31.♘xd5 cd 32.a5, and ♖b2-b6 was highly promising.

29. ... ♗g6-d3
30. ♕d2-e1 ♕d7xd4
31. ♖e5xe6? ...

The Ukrainian player had probably calculated the variation 31.♖b7! ♘d5 32.♘xd5 ed 33.♖ee7 ♖f8 34.♖xg7+ ♕xg7 35.♖xg7+ ♔xg7 and failed to notice that after 36.♕a5!, Black doesn't have a good reply. Now the chances are equal again.

31. ... ♘e7-d5
32. ♘c3xd5 ♕d4xb2
33. ♖e6xc6 ♕b2-b7

It was better to return the queen to the center (33...♕d4 34.♖d6 ♔h8).

34. ♕e1-e5 ♕b7-f7
35. ♖c6-c7 ...

35.♘e7+ ♔h7 36.♘c8 deserved attention, isolating the rook in the corner. That said, after 36...♕f5 37.♕xf5 ♗xf5 38.♘d6 ♗d3 39.♘xc4 ♖e8 the bishop is better than the knight in the open position, and Black is virtually guaranteed a draw.

35. ... ♖a8-e8!
36. ♕e5-g3 ♕f7-f8
37. ♔g1-h2 ...

White wins a pawn via 37.♘b6 ♖e7 38.♘xc4 ♖xc7 39.♕xc7 with a different material balance and once again the pawn is insufficient for a win.

37. ... ♔g8-h8
38. ♘d5-f4 ♕f8-f6
39. h3-h4 ♖e8-f8
40. ♘f4-h5 ♕f6-g6
41. ♘h5xg7 ♕g6xg3+
42. f2xg3 ♖f8-f6
43. ♘g7-h5 ♖f6-f5
44. ♘h5-f4 ♖f5-a5
45. g3-g4 ♖a5xa4
46. g4-g5 h6xg5
47. h4xg5 ♖a4-b4
48. g5-g6 ♖b4-b6
49. g6-g7+ ♔h8-h7?

The Bulgarian Grandmaster errs out of a clear sky. After 49...♔g8 50.♘h5 ♗f5 51.♘f4 ♗e6 52.♘h5 ♗f5 White has to settle for a draw by repetition.

50. g2-g4? ...

Kryvoruchko missed that Black had no control over f7, whereupon 50.♘h5! ♗f5 51.♖f7! (51.♖xc4?! ♗e6 52.♖c7 ♗g8) 51...♗e4 52.g4 would have won the bishop.

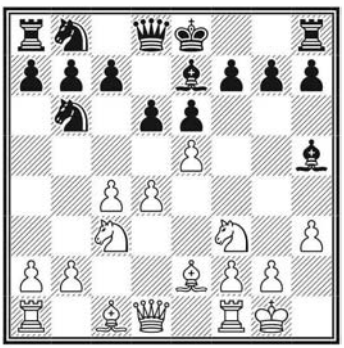
50.	**...**	**♗d3-g6**
51.	**♔h2-g3**	**♖b6-d6**
52.	**♔g3-h4**	**♔h7-g8**
53.	**♔h4-g5**	**♗g6-f7**
54.	**♔g5-f5**	**♖d6-b6**
55.	**g4-g5**	**♔g8xg7**
56.	**g5-g6**	**♖b6-f6+**
57.	**♔f5-g5**	**♖f6xf4**

½ - ½

As we have seen, the bishop is more often exchanged for the knight than retreated to g6. Then, the position of the pawn on h3 (unlike in the variations analyzed) doesn't matter much.

Chapter 87. 6. 0-0 ♗e7 7. h3 ♗h5 8. c4 ♘b6 9. ♘c3

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**♗c8-g4**
5.	**♗f1-e2**	**e7-e6**
6.	**0-0**	**♗f8-e7**
7.	**h2-h3**	**♗g4-h5**
8.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
9.	**♘b1-c3**	**...**



We now consider the variations from Chapter 85 with the addition of h2-h3 and ♗g4-h5.

9.	**...**	**0-0**

According to the Megabase, after 9...de 10.♘xe5 Black has lost 10 out of 10. Obviously, his position isn't hopeless, but it's certainly no fun to play. The pieces (among which the knight on b6 looks particularly ugly) are heaped together, and it's not easy to break free. Liquidating the central pawn led to two opening disasters: 10...♗xe2 11.♕xe2 ♕xd4? 12.♖d1 ♕c5 13.b4! ♕xb4 14.♘b5 ♘a6? (14...0-0 15.♗a3 ♕xa3 16.♘xa3 ♗xa3 is more resilient, partially compensating for the lost queen) 15.♕f3 ♖f8 16.♕xb7 (Sax – Hazai, Budapest 1974) and 12...♕h4 13.♘b5 ♗d8 14.♕f3 ♕f6? 15.♗g5! (Appel – Nieminen, Finland 1982).

10. ♗c1-e3 ...

After 10.♗f4 ♘c6 11.b3 the situation has changed, and exchanging in the center practically equalizes chances: 11...de 12.♘xe5 ♗xe2 13.♘xe2 ♘xe5 14.♗xe5

♘d7 15.♗g3 ♘f6. If 11.ed then the dark-squared bishops are removed from the board and the game may continue 11...♗xd6 12.♗xd6 cd 13.d5 ed 14.cd ♗xf3 15.♗xf3 ♘e5 16.♗e2 ♖c8 17.♕d4 a6 18.♖ac1 f5 19.f4 ♘bd7 20.♖fe1 ♕f6 21.♕xf6 ♘xf6 (Djuric – Cvetkovic, Cetinje 1993) – resources for the struggle were all used up and a draw was agreed several moves later.

10. ... d6-d5

Vladimir Bagirov played this line in the Baku tournaments in the 1960s. However, the Megabase only has games starting from Kataly-mov – Alburt (Odessa 1972) and Spassky – Fischer (Reykjavik 1972). Game 19 of the world championship was a major driver in the further development of this variation and is commented on as Game 100 of this book.

10...♘c6 11.ed cd 12.d5 leads to the main line of Chapter 86. Bagirov justifiably considers the line 10...a5 11.b3 ♘a6 to be relatively reliable. For example, 12.♕d2 ♘d7 13.♖fd1 ♗g6 14.♗f4 de 15.♘xe5 ♘xe5 16.♗xe5 ♘b4 17.♗f3 c6 18.♘e4 ♖e8 19.♕b2 ♗xe4 20.♗xe4 ♗d6 21.♗xd6 ♕xd6, and the simplifications emasculated play in Salmensuu – Norri (Finland 2005). An interesting line from this game that wasn't played was 17...♗c2 18.♖dc1 (18.♖e1 ♗g5 19.♕e2 ♗d3 20.♕d1 ♗c2 with move repetition) 18...♗g5 19.♗f4 ♗xf4 20.♕xf4 ♘d3 21.♕d2 ♘xc1 22.♕xc2 ♘xb3 23.ab ♕xd4 24.♗xb7 Eab8 25.♗e4 f5 26.♗f3 ♕e5 – and Black's position isn't so bad.

11. c4-c5 ...

If in reply to 11.b3 Black isn't tempted by the standard and somewhat boring 11...♘c6 12.c5 ♘c8, then it's worth looking at the fun game M.Rytshagov – Maki (Tampere 1992): 11...dc 12.bc ♘c6 13.♖b1 ♖b8 14.♗d3 ♘b4 15.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 16.♘g5+ ♔g6 17.g4 ♗xg5 18.♖xb4 ♔h7 19.gh ♗xe3 20.♕d3+ ♔g8 21.fe, after which the strongest continuation, 21...♕g5+ 22.♔h2 ♕xh5, restores the pawn balance in advance of a tense struggle.

In the game A.Zhigalko – Leontiev (Voronezh 2011) the Belorussian Grandmaster crushed his opponent in a short game: 11.cd ♘xd5 12.♕b3 ♘b6 13.a4 a5 14.♖fd1 ♘8d7? (14...♕c8 was correct, in order to meet 15.d5 by capturing the pawn with the unpinned knight) 15.d5! ♗xf3 16.de! ♗xe2 17.♘xe2 ♕c8 18.ef+ ♔h8 19.e6 ♘e5 20.♖ac1, and Black can resign already. Rublevsky found a more valuable difference from the variations of Chapter 85 in his game with Jorgensen (Denmark 1993): 13.d5!? cd 14.♗xb6 ab 15.♘xd5 ♗c5 16.♖ad1 ♕c8 17.♖fe1 (17.♘g5! ♗xe2 18.♕c2 g6 19.♕xe2 is better for White) 17...♘c6 18.♕c3 ♘e7?? (a blunder in a bearable position with the possibility of capturing the a2

pawn), after which Black resigned without waiting for 19.♕xc5!. The continuation 15...♘d7 16.♖ad1 c6 fails due to 17.♘xb6!, which doesn't work when the bishop is on g4.

11...ed is probably more accurate. After 12.♘e1 ♗xe2 13.♕xe2 ♘c6 14.♘d3 ♕d7 15.b3 ♖ae8 16.♖ad1 ♗b4 17.♘xb4 ♘xb4 18.♗c1 a5 19.a4 ♘c8 20.♗a3 ♘a7 21.♕d2 f6 22.f4 ♘ac6 23.♘a2 ♕e7 24.♖c1 Kabanov put Kovalenko under pressure (Samara 2012), although Bagirov considered 13... c6 to be more careful. An extremely complicated battle was seen in the game King versus Baburin (England 2000): 12.g4 ♗g6 13.♘e1 f6 14.f4 fe 15.de c5 16.f5 ♗e8 17.♗f4 (17.f6 d4 18.fe ♖xf1+ 19.♗xf1 ♕e7 20.♗xd4 cd 21.♕xd4 ♘c6 22.♕d6 ♕xe5 23.♕xe5 ♘xe5 unexpectedly leads to quiet equality) 17...♗c6 18.♗f3 d4 19.♘e4 ♘d5 20.♘g2 ♘d7 21.♗g3 ♕b6 22.b3 ♖ad8.

11. ... ♗h5xf3

Now it's time to converge parallel lines from the two chapters. After 11...♘c8 12.b4 b6 13.♕d2 a5 14.a3 ab 15.ab ♖xa1 16.♖xa1 Baburin only extracted his knight from c8 with the help of Tzermiadianos (Isle of Man 1996). 11...♘6d7 12.♕d2 f6 13.♘g5!? ♗f7 14.♘xf7 ♖xf7 15.ef ♗xf6 16.♗g4 ♘f8 17.♖fe1 ♘c6 18.♖ab1 ♔h8 19.b4 a6 20.a3 also fails to equalize (Neron de Surgy – Solozhenkin, France 1997). The French amateur eventually let the GM off with a draw.

Evgeniy Solozhenkin has a weakness for attacking with f7-f6, although he hasn't had a lot of success in this line. For example, 11...♘6d7 12.b4 f6 13.ef ♗xf6 14.g4 ♗f7 15.g5 ♗e7 16.♕d2 ♘c6 17.a3 ♗h5 18.♘h2 ♗xe2 19.♘xe2 e5?! (this is the wrong time to break out of the cramped position) 20.f4! ed 21.♘xd4 ♘xd4 22.♗xd4 c6 23.♗b2 ♖e8 24.♕c3 ♗f8 25.♘g4 ♖e4 26.♘h6+! gh 27.♕h8+ ♔f7 28.♕xh7+ ♔e8 29.♕g6+ ♔e7 30.gh ♗xh6 31.♕h7+ ♔e8 32.♕xh6 with an extra pawn and clear initiative (Jarvenpaa – Solozhenkin, Helsinki 2014).

12. g2xf3 ...

The battle of the champions after 12.♗xf3 is the subject of Game 100.

12. ... ♘b6-c8

13. f3-f4 ...

With the addition of h2-h3 and ♗g4-h5 the plan from the game Nikolenko – Bratchenko, advertised in Chapter 85, fails to work, and White manages extremely rarely without pushing his f-pawn.

13. ... ♘b8-c6

With the help of 13...f5 Nalbandian versus Asrian (Yerevan 2001) successfully blockaded his opponent's initiative on the kingside, but found it harder to defend his queenside: 14.♔h2 ♔h8 15.b4 ♘c6 16.♖b1 ♗h4 17.♗d3 ♕e8 18.♘e2 ♘d8 19.♘g1 ♘f7 20.b5 ♗d8 21.a4 ♖g8 22.♘f3 ♘e7 23.♖g1 ♘g6 24.a5 b6 25.a6 ♕d7.

It would be wrong to both

overestimate and underestimate the threat of f4-f5. If 13...♗h4 14.f5 ef 15.♘xd5!? ♘c6 16.♗f3 ♖b8 or 14...♘e7 15.♗d3 ♘xf5 16.♗xf5 ef 17.♕f3 c6 18.♕xf5 ♘a6 19.♘e2 ♘c7 20.♔h2 f6 (Folk – L.Smejkal, Czech Republic 1995) Black is no worse.

The game Zarnicki – Labollita (Buenos Aires 1999) continued 13...♗h4 14.♗d3 g6 15.f5!? ef 16.♕f3 ♘c6 (which is recommended in Chapter 85 with the pawn on h2) 17.♘xd5 ♘8e7 18.♗c4 ♘xd5 19.♗xd5 f4 (Black could create some counterplay with 19...♕d7!? 20.♗xc6 bc and ♖f8-b8) 20.♕xf4 ♕xd5 21.♕xh4 f5 22.ef ♖ae8 23.♖ad1 ♖e6? 24.♕g5 ♖d8 25.h4, and Black has nothing for the two pawns. The correct play is 23...♖e4 24.♕g5 ♕xg5 25.♗xg5 ♘xd4 26.f3 ♖e5 27.h4 ♘e6 with a probably draw.

14. b2-b4 ...

In response to 14.♗d3, apart from 14...g6 Black can build a bigger wall with 14...f5. After 15.ef ♗xf6 16.♕h5 h6 17.♔h1 ♕e8 White runs out of time on the kingside, while after 15.a3 a6 16.b4 ♔h8 17.♔h2 ♖g8 18.♕f3 ♕e8 19.♖ab1 ♘d8 20.b5 ab 21.♘xb5 ♕d7 22.♖b3 ♘a7 23.♘xa7 ♖xa7 (Marusenko – Baburin, Port Erin 1999) he runs out of time on the queenside.

The idea of playing the exchange combination ♗e7xc5 cannot be carried out in response to all of White's lines. For example, 14.♗d3 ♗xc5? 15.dc d4 16.♗xh7+! ♔xh7 17.♕h5+ ♔g8 18.♘e4 de? 19.♖fd1 ♕e7 20.♘g5 (19.♘g5? misses the target in view of 19...♕d3) or 19.♘f6+ gf 20.♔h2 ♖e8 21.♕h6 with a win. On the other hand, after 14.♔h2 everything falls into place for Black: 14...♗xc5!? 15.dc d4 16.♘e4 de 17.fe ♕xd1 (17...♕h4!?) 18.♖axd1 ♘8e7 19.♔g2 ♖fd8 20.♔f2 ♔f8 21.♘c3 ♘b4 22.a3 ♘bd5 23.♘b5 a6 24.♘d4 (Motylev – Appel, Germany 2014) – and White's advantage disappears.

The careful reader now knows the correct refutation of 14.f5 – 14...ef 15.♗f3 ♗g5 16.♘xd5 f4! In the variation 17.♘xf4 ♗xf4 18.♗xf4 ♕xd4 19.♕xd4 ♘xd4 20.♗g4 ♘e7 21.♖ad1 ♘ec6 22.♗e3 ♖ad8 23.♖d2 ♘e6 24.♖xd8 ♖xd8 (Hendriks – Bosch, Enschede 1995) the white bishops are put to shade by Black's knights. The idea of f5-f4 is quite universal: 15.♕b3 ♗h4 (freeing up this square for the knight) 16.♕xd5 ♘8e7 17.♕c4 f4! 18.♗xf4 ♕xd4 with an attractive position.

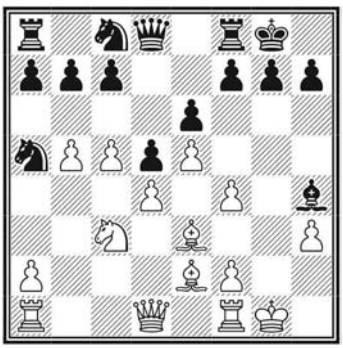
14. ... ♗e7-h4

Bagirov exaggerated the importance of the position arising after 14...a6 15.f5 ef 16.f4 ♘b8. Practitioners have ignored it in their games so far, while Houdini has doubts about the success of breaking up the central fortress after c7-c6. White should probably win back the pawn with the help of 16.♗f3

and 17.♘xd5 with slightly better chances in a complicated position.

15. b4-b5 ♘c6-a5

15...♘6e7 16.♗d3 f5 17.♔h2 ♘g6 18.♖g1 ♕e8 19.♕f3 ♔h8 20.a4 ♗d8 21.a5 ♘ce7 is also fine, successfully defending the flank (Galstian – Ara Minasian, Yerevan 2005).



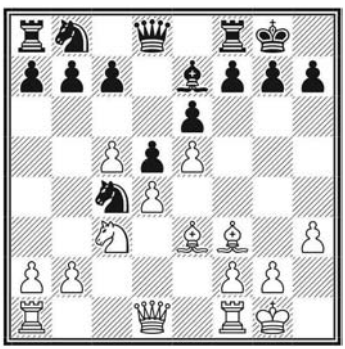
After 16.♗d3 g6 17.♕g4 f5 18.♕g2 (we don't have any confidence in the computer's recommendation of 18.ef ♕xf6 19.♘b1 followed by ♘b1-d2) 18... ♘e7 19.♔h2 b6 20.c6 a6 21.a4 ♘c4 22.♘e2 ♘xe3 23.fe a5 there is nowhere to break through and time to agree a draw (McDonald – Palatnik, Hastings 2000). Tischbierek versus Tiviakov (Cape Town 2013) gained an excellent position without f7-f5: 16.♔h2 ♘e7 17.♗d3 ♘f5 18.c6 bc 19.♗xf5 ef 20.♕a4 ♘c4 21.bc ♖e8 22.♕b5 ♘b6 23.♖ac1 ♖e6 24.♘a4 ♗e7. It looks like the advanced pawns on the queenside don't really threaten Black.

Game 100

B.Spassky – R.Fischer

Reykjavik 1972, Game 19 of the World Championship Match

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**♗c8-g4**
5.	**♗f1-e2**	**e7-e6**
6.	**0-0**	**♗f8-e7**
7.	**h2-h3**	**♗g4-h5**
8.	**c2-c4**	**♘d5-b6**
9.	**♘b1-c3**	**0-0**
10.	**♗c1-e3**	**d6-d5**
11.	**c4-c5**	**♗h5xf3**
12.	**♗e2xf3**	**♘b6-c4**



13. b2-b3 ...

Forcing an exchange, Spassky opens the file with pressure on f7 and at the same time strengthens the center. However, thanks to the efforts of Efim Geller, theory has since moved in the direction of 13.♗f4. The c5-d4-e5 pawn chain gives White a spatial advantage, but one which is gradually liquidated

by b7-b6 and f7-f6. For example, 13...♘c6 14.b3 ♘4a5 15.♖c1 ♕d7 16.♗e3 f6 17.ef ♗xf6 18.♕d2 b6 19.♘a4 ♘e7 20.♗e2 ♘f5 with equality (Geller – V.Bagirov, Tbilisi 1978). After 15.♕d2 b6 16.♘a4 ♕d7 17.♖ac1 f6 18.♗e2 fe 19.de ♘d8 20.♗e3 ♘ac6 21.f4 ♖b8 22.♗b5! bc? 23.♘xc5 ♗xc5 24.♖xc5 Kovchan gained a decisive advantage against Schatz (Dresden 2009). However, 16...bc 17.dc ♖b8 deflects the threats on the queenside.

Attacking immediately with 13... b6!? was extensively analyzed by Bagirov, but his analysis nevertheless requires some corrections. After 14.b3 ♘a5 15.♘a4 (?!) bc 16.♘xc5 ♗xc5 17.dc ♘ac6 the advantage of the bishop pair is not noticed in the resulting structure: 18.♖e1 ♘d7 19.♖c1 a5 20.♕d2 ♖b8 21.♖c3 a4!? 22.ba ♖b4 23.♗d1 ♖d4 24.♕c1 (Gufeld – Gurgenidze, Tbilisi 1974) 24...♕a8 25.♗c2 ♖b8 with decent play. The continuation 15.b4 ♘c4 16.♖c1 c6 17.♗e2 a5?! 18.b5!? bc 19.dc ♗xc5 20.♗xc4 dc 21.♕g4 ♕d3 22.♖fd1 ♕f5 23.a4 cb 24.♕xf5 ef 25.♘xb5 ♘a6 26.♖xc4 ♖fd8 27.♘d6 ♖ab8 (Tukhaev – Biriukov, Alushta 2010) is acceptable for Black. However, 22.♘a4! is stronger, with the idea of b5-b6. Despite the analysis of Bagirov, 17...b5 is correct, and 18.a4 is met by 18...a5! 19.ba ♕xa5 20.ab cb with approximate equality.

13. ... ♘c4xe3

14. f2xe3 b7-b6?!

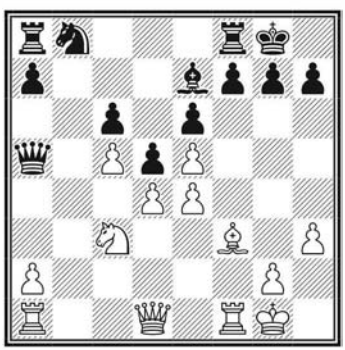
It would have been better to carry out a preventative attack on the d4 pawn in order to prevent his opponent's activity in the center. See for example the game Bazant – Kantorik (Stare Mesto 2003): 14... ♘c6 15.♖b1 a5 16.♕e2 b6 17.♘a4 ♖b8 18.♕b5 ♕d7 19.♗e2? (he should have first exchanged 19.cb cb) 19...bc 20.♘xc5 ♕e8 21.♘b7 ♘xd4 22.ed ♕xb5 23.♗xb5 ♖xb7 24.♗c6 ♖b4 25.♖bd1 ♖fb8, and Black converted his extra pawn into a point.

15. e3-e4 c7-c6

16. b3-b4 b6xc5

Many commentators (Keres, Timman, Spassky and Kasparov) have studied exchanges on the queenside via 16...a5 17.a3 ab 18.ab ♖xa1 19.♕xa1. Kasparov concluded: 19...♗g5 20.♔h1!, thereby preventing the knight from getting to a6, and, despite the weakness of the d4 pawn and the opportunity to attack with f7-f6, retaining a small advantage.

17. b4xc5 ♕d8-a5?!



According to Kasparov, this burst of energy is out of place (instead of the careful 17...♘d7).

18. ♘c3xd5!? ...

Spassky declares open warfare. Olafsson suggested using this tactic in the center as a threat after 18.♕e1!? If 18...♗g5 19.ed ed 20.e6!? ♕d8 21.ef+ Black cannot capture the pawn due to 22.♗xd5!

18. ... ♗e7-g5!?

Fischer makes it as difficult as possible for his opponent to develop the initiative. After 18... ed 19.ed ♗g5 20.♔h1! ♘a6 21.d6 ♖ac8 21.♗e4 (Kasparov) the white pawns create a pretty (and rarely encountered) geometric shape and divide the enemy forces to the greatest extent possible.

19. ♗f3-h5!? ...

In the line 19.♕d3!? ed 20.cd ♘a6 21.d6! ♘xc5 22.dc ♕xc5+ 23.♔h1 ♕xe5 24.♗xc6 ♖ad8 25.d7 (Kasparov) it's hard to find a way to counter the passed pawn. It's interesting to compare Kasparov's analysis with Houdini's assessment after 19...♘a6 20.h4! ♗xh4 21.♘e3 ♖ad8 22.♘c4 ♕b5 23.♖ab1! ♘b4 24.♕c3! ♘xa2 25.♕c2 ♘b4 26.♖xb4 ♕xb4 27.♖b1 and then 27...♕xb1+ 28.♕xb1 ♖xd4 29.♘a5 ♖d7. The computer isn't overly impressed by White's extra knight, as it's his sole strong piece. A long and hard struggle ahead looms and Black is far from doomed.

19. ... c6xd5

This is the only way to accept the sacrifice. If 19...ed? 20.♗xf7+! ♖xf7 21.♖xf7 ♕d2 22.e6 or, even more so, after 21...♗e3+ 22.♔h1 ♔xf7 23.♕h5+ ♔e7 24.♖f1, Black is in very hot water.

20. ♗h5xf7+!? ...

It is at this point that the champions finally 'depart' from the later game by little-known followers Debevec and Loviscek (Ljubljana 2007). After 20.ed ed 21.♗xf7+ ♖xf7 22.♖xf7 ♕d2 23.♕xd2 ♗xd2 24.♖af1 ♗e3+ 25.♔h1 ♘c6 26.♖c7 ♘xd4 27.♖ff7 ♘e6 28.♖xa7 ♖xa7 29.♖xa7 ♗xc5 30.♖d7 d4 those players headed for a drawn ending. After some mistakes they did eventually draw. Given that 24.♖f3 ♘c6 25.♖d1 ♗g5 26.♖b3 still presents Black with a lot of problems in the endgame 22... ♕c3!? is more promising.

20. ... ♖f8xf7

21. ♖f1xf7 ♕a5-d2?!

Fischer decides to stop pulling the tiger's whiskers and heads for the endgame. That said, 21...♘c6 22.♕g4 ♘xd4! 22.♖af1 ♕xc5 23.♖xg7+ with perpetual check (Spassky) or 22.ed ♔xf7 23.dc ♕c3! 24.♖b1 ♕e3+! 25.♔h1 ♕e4, fighting off White's pressure with difficulty (Kasparov) was objectively stronger.

22. ♕d1xd2 ♗g5xd2

23. ♖a1-f1 ♘b8-c6

24. e4xd5 ...

The variation 24.♖c7! de!? (proposed by Olafsson) 25.♖xc6

de 26.♖xe6 e2 27.♔f2 ef♕+ 28.♔xf1 ♖d8! 29.♖d6 ♖xd6 30.ed ♔f7 31.♔e2 ♗a5 (Spassky) leads to a draw. Unfortunately, the commentators ignored White's serious resource 25.♖ff7! ♗h6 26.g4, where the threat of g4-g5 forces Black to make serious concessions.

24.	**...**	**e6xd5**
25.	**♖f7-d7**	**♗d2-e3+**
26.	**♔g1-h1**	**♗e3xd4**
27.	**e5-e6**	**♗d4-e5**
28.	**♖d7xd5**	**♖a8-e8**
29.	**♖f1-e1**	**♖e8xe6**
30.	**♖d5-d6**	**♔g8-f7**

Black has nothing to worry about after 30...♖xd6 31.cd ♔f7 32.♖c1 ♘d4 33.♖c7+ ♔e6 34.♖xa7 ♔xd6, but getting to a rook ending settles the game anyway.

31.	**♖d6xc6**	**♖e6xc6**
32.	**♖e1xe5**	**♔f7-f6**
33.	**♖e5-d5**	**♔f6-e6**
34.	**♖d5-h5**	**h7-h6**
35.	**♔h1-h2**	**♖c6-a6**
36.	**c5-c6**	**♖a6xc6**
37.	**♖h5-a5**	**a7-a6**
38.	**♔h2-g3**	**♔e6-f6**
39.	**♔g3-f3**	**♖c6-c3+**
40.	**♔f3-f2**	**♖c3-c2+**

½ - ½

Unlike in the variations from Chapter 85, White is unable to build his optimal attacking setup after taking g2xf3 and his prospects of achieving an advantage are somewhat murky. If 12. ♗xf3 ♘c4 13. b3 then Fischer's play in the opening can be improved and Black has nothing to worry about.

Conclusion

Obviously, this book contains many differences of opinion with Vladimir Bagirov's monograph The Alekhine Defense, published by the Fizkultura i sport publishing house in 1987. Time and modern software are ruthless in treating the Grandmaster's variations. But, as we climb on the shoulders of this giant, we can better observe the full extent of the opening and we recognize the enduring value of Bagirov's book. He is the author of a multitude of interesting ideas.

As far as the Alekhine Defense itself is concerned, it occupies a worthy place among the semi-open openings. If Black avoids extreme variations then the worst that can befall him is to end up manoeuvring on three ranks, waiting for the appropriate moment to break out. A similar picture is observed in the more restrained Sicilian lines (including the Hedgehog System), the French Defense (Rubinstein Variation), Caro-Kann Defense and Scandinavian Defense – after all, this list of openings has a fairly good reputation! A trend is now emerging whereby White chooses systems granting him a minimal but stable advantage, whereas the aggressive lines (the Two and Four Pawns) have failed to prove their worth and have retired to the background. 1...♘f6 offers Black a number of acceptable defenses in reply to any approach adopted by White. The multitude of playable positions (and not those calculated by the computer up to a clear result) – and 'blank spots' – is attracting the attention of many chess players. Hence we see the Alekhine Defense as quite a promising and playable opening.

Update

Since the publication of the original Russian version of this book, the Alekhine Defense has retained its popularity. Please find below a number of games played prior to the publication of the English language edition.

Part 2, Chapter 4.

Game 101

T.Petenyi – V.Ivanchuk

Novi Sad 2016

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**♘b1-c3**	**d7-d5**
3.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d7**
4.	**e5-e6**	**f7xe6**
5.	**d2-d4**	**c7-c5**
6.	**♘g1-f3**	**♘b8-c6**
7.	**♗f1-b5**	**g7-g6**



8.	**h2-h4**	**...**

Diverging from 8.♗e3. Now White has to make some concessions in order to hang onto d4.

8.	**...**	**♗f8-g7**
9.	**♗b5xc6**	**b7xc6**
10.	**♘f3-g5**	**♘d7-f6**
11.	**h4-h5**	**...**

The objectively better continuations 11.♗e3 and 11.dc ♕a5 12.0-0 don't fit well with h2-h4, whereas the 'logical' continuation in the actual game is dubious due to 12...♘xh5 or 12...cd (13.♕xd4 ♘xh5).

11.	**...**	**g6xh5**
12.	**♗c1-f4**	**0-0**
13.	**♗f4-e5**	**♕d8-e8**
14.	**♘g5-f3**	**c5xd4**
15.	**♗e5xd4**	**...**

If 15.♕xd4 it's simpler for Black to blackmail his opponent with an exchange of queens. Now, Ivanchuk returns one of the pawns, although with the help of 15...♕g6 16.♕e2 ♘g4 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 18.♘e5 ♕f5 he could have successfully challenged for the key e5 square.

15.	**...**	**e6-e5**
16.	**♗d4xe5**	**♕e8-g6**
17.	**♕d1-e2**	**♗c8-g4**
18.	**0-0-0**	**♗g7-h6**

19. ♔c1-b1 ♘f6-d7



20. ♗e5-g3 ...

The Slovak master should have kept his aim on e5 (20.♖de1), as now Black frees up with a massive impact.

20. ... e7-e5!
21. ♕e2-a6 ♗g4-f5
22. ♘f3-h4?! ...

Should he bring the queen back home? In that case Black should probably repeat moves, 22.♕e2 ♗g4 23.♕a6, and then continue with 23...♖fb8.

22. ... ♗f5xc2+
23. ♔b1-a1 ♕g6-f6
24. ♖d1-e1 e5-e4
25. ♕a6-e2 ♗c2-d3
26. ♕e2xh5 ♗h6-g7
27. ♕h5-g4 ♘d7-e5
28. ♗g3xe5 ♕f6xe5
29. ♖h1-h3 ♖f8-f4
30. ♕g4-g3 ♖a8-f8
31. ♘h4xg6 h7xg6
32. ♕g3xg6 ♕e5-f6
33. ♕g6-h7+ ♔g8-f7
34. ♕h7-h5+ ♕f6-g6

0-1

Part 13, Chapter 67

Game 102
M.Yurtseven – F.Berkes
Paracin 2016

One of Hungary's leading chess players, Berkes, is currently probably the strongest player in the world regularly playing the Alekhine Defense.

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 d7-d6
4. ♘g1-f3 d6xe5
5. ♘f3xe5 c7-c6
6. ♗f1-c4 ♘b8-d7
7. ♘g1-f3 e7-e6
8. 0-0 ♗f8-e7



Diverging from Luther's idea, 8... b5. Black plans to break out with c6-c5, without giving White a reason to play a2-a4.

9. ♖f1-e1 0-0
10. ♗c4-f1 c6-c5
11. c2-c4 ♘d5-f6
12. d4xc5 ...

12.♘c3 cxd4 13.♘xd4 a6 14.♗f4

was tried earlier, after which it is hard for Black to complete the mobilization of his queenside. It seems that 7... ♘7f6 is safer than 7...e6.

12.	**...**	**♘d7xc5**
13.	**♕d1-c2**	**b7-b6**
14.	**b2-b3**	**♗c8-b7**
15.	**♘b1-d2**	**♕d8-d6**
16.	**♗c1-a3**	**♖a8-d8**
17.	**♖a1-d1**	**♖f8-e8**
18.	**♘f3-e5**	**♕d6-c7**
19.	**♗a3-b2**	**h7-h6**
20.	**b3-b4**	**...**

It's hard for White to design a plan to strengthen his play; advancing the b-pawn can hardly be considered a plan. Maybe he should have transferred his bishop from f1 to f3 via e2.

20.	**...**	**♘c5-d7**
21.	**a2-a3**	**a7-a5**
22.	**♕c2-b3**	**a5xb4**
23.	**a3xb4**	**♗e7-d6**
24.	**♘d2-f3**	**♘d7xe5**
25.	**♘f3xe5?!**	**...**

Following a series of mistakes the Turkish player misses a pretty combination attack. After 25.♗xe5 ♘g4 26.♗xd6 ♖xd6 27.♖xd6 ♕xd6 28.♖d1 ♕c7 29.g3 the weakness on the kingside is marginal and chances are equal.

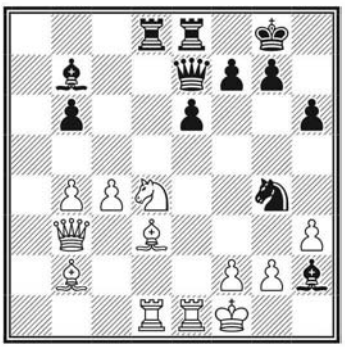
25.	**...**	**♘f6-e4**
26.	**♘e5-f3**	**♕c7-e7**
27.	**♗f1-d3?!**	**...**

Here he needed to set up a clumsy defensive position with 27.♗a3 ♖a8 28.♖e3.

27.	**...**	**♘e4-f6**
28.	**♘f3-d4?**	**...**

The lesser evil would have been to play a pawn down after 28.♗xf6 gf 29.c5 ♗xf3 30.♗h7+ ♔xh7 31.cd ♖xd6 32.♕xf3.

28.	**...**	**♘f6-g4**
29.	**h2-h3**	**♗d6-h2+**
30.	**♔g1-f1**	**...**



30.	**...**	**♘g4xf2!**
31.	**♔f1xf2**	**♕e7-h4+**
32.	**♔f2-e2**	**♗b7xg2**
33.	**♖e1-g1**	**♕h4xh3**
34.	**♗d3-c2**	**e6-e5**
35.	**♘d4-f5**	**♕h3-g4+**
36.	**♔e2-f2**	**♗h2xg1+**
37.	**♖d1xg1**	**♖d8-d2+**

0-1

Part 13, Chapter 69

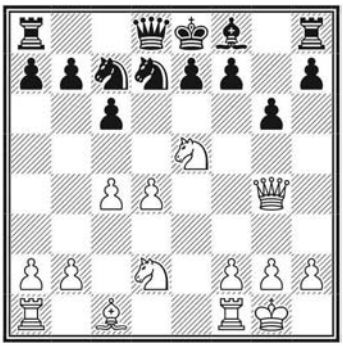
Game 103

S.Sethuraman – A.Ramirez

Moscow 2017

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**d6xe5**
5.	**♘f3xe5**	**c7-c6**

6. ♗f1-e2 ♗c8-f5
7. 0-0 ♘b8-d7
8. ♗e2-g4 ♗f5xg4
9. ♕d1xg4 g7-g6
10. c2-c4 ♘d5-c7
11. ♘b1-d2 ...



Transferring the knight via d2 to f3 diverges from Game 80, Grischuk – Kamsky (Istanbul 2012).

11. ... ♗f8-g7
12. ♘d2-f3 ♕d8-c8

A good way to equalize would be by 12...♘e6 13.♗e3 ♘xe5 14.de ♕c7 15.♕e4 0-0 followed by likely simplifications along the d-file.

13. ♕g4-h4 ♘d7xe5
14. d4xe5 ♕c8-f5

Here the best continuation was 14...♘e6, without worrying about exchanging the dark-squared bishops. That said, the continuation played is only dangerous at first glance – the Indian GM will not manage to achieve a stable advantage.

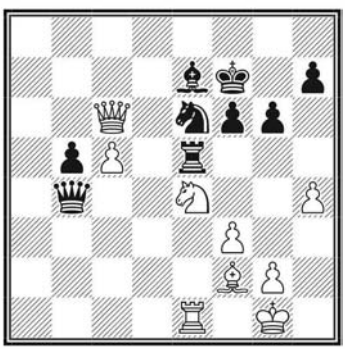
15. ♗c1-g5 f7-f6
16. e5xf6 e7xf6
17. ♖f1-e1+ ♔e8-f7
18. ♗g5-e3 ♘c7-e6
19. c4-c5 ♖h8-d8
20. ♕h4-b4 ♖d8-d7
21. ♘f3-d2 ♗g7-f8
22. ♘d2-e4 b7-b5
23. f2-f3 a7-a5
24. ♕b4-c3 a5-a4
25. ♖a1-d1 ♖a8-d8
26. ♖d1xd7 ♖d8xd7
27. b2-b3 a4xb3
28. a2xb3 ♗f8-e7

28...♕e5 29.♕xe5 fxe5 30.b4 ♖a7 would immediately equalize. Ramirez believes that the business along the d-file isn't finished.

29. b3-b4 ♕f5-d5
30. h2-h4 ♕d5-d3
31. ♕c3-a1 ♕d3-c4
32. ♕a1-a8 ♕c4xb4
33. ♗e3-f2 ♘e6-d8
34. ♕a8-c8 ♖d7-d5?

He shouldn't have underestimated his opponent's unexpected choice of the 'scenic route'. Rather, he should have played 34...♖a7, not allowing the queen to penetrate the seventh rank.

35. ♕c8-c7 ♘d8-e6
36. ♕c7xc6 ♖d5-e5



37. ♖e1-c1? ...

Sethuraman missed a win with 37.♕d7! ♘xc5 38.♘d6+ ♔g7 39.♖xe5 ♘xd7 40.♖xe7+. Now he needs to find a way to save the game.

37.	**...**	**♘e6-d4**
38.	**♗f2xd4**	**♕b4xd4+**
39.	**♔g1-h1**	**f7-f5**
40.	**♘e4-d6+?**	**...**

If 40.♘g5+ ♔g7 41.♕xb5 White shelters from check with his knight and probably gets a draw.

40.	**...**	**♔f7-g7**
41.	**♘d6-e8+**	**♔g7-g8**
42.	**♘e8-d6**	**♕d4xh4+**
43.	**♔h1-g1**	**♗e7-g5**

0-1

Part 14, Chapter 71

Game 104

E.Hansen – J.Xiong

Wijk aan Zee 2017

1.	**e2-e4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d5**
3.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘g1-f3**	**g7-g6**
5.	**♗f1-c4**	**c7-c6**
6.	**0-0**	**♗f8-g7**
7.	**e5xd6**	**♕d8xd6**
8.	**♖f1-e1**	**0-0**

Diagram



9.	**c2-c3**	**...**

Diverging from 9.♗g5. This is not the most common move here, however, it doesn't change the standard balance of four operable ranks versus three.

9.	**...**	**♗f8-g4**
10.	**♘b1-d2**	**♘b8-d7**
11.	**h2-h3**	**♗g4xf3**
12.	**♘d2xf3**	**e7-e6**
13.	**a2-a4**	**a7-a5**
14.	**♗c1-g5**	**♘d7-b6**
15.	**♗c4-f1**	**c6-c5**

This freeing move is important in this type of structure but it doesn't mean that Black can afford to play inaccurately going forward.

16.	**d4xc5**	**♕d6xc5**
17.	**♕d1-b3**	**♖f8-c8**
18.	**♖a1-d1**	**h7-h6**
19.	**♗g5-c1**	**♖c8-d8**
20.	**♘f3-d4**	**♖d8-d6**
21.	**♘d4-b5**	**♖d6-d7**
22.	**g2-g3**	**♖a8-d8**
23.	**h3-h4**	**♘b6-c8**
24.	**♘b5-a3**	**♘c8-d6**
25.	**♘a3-c4**	**♘d6-f5**
26.	**♕b3-b5**	**♕c5-c7**
27.	**♖d1-d3**	**♖d8-c8**
28.	**♖d3-f3**	**b7-b6**
29.	**♕b5-b3**	**♘f5-e7**
30.	**♖e1-d1**	**♘e7-f5**
31.	**♘c4-a3**	**♗g7-f8**
32.	**♘a3-b5**	**♕c7-b8?!**

The long manoeuvres have numbed the alertness of the talented American junior, and he has left the knight on d5 without protection. 32...♕c5 was stronger.



33. h4-h5! ♗f8-c5

33...gh doesn't work due to 34.♖xf5. After the destruction of the kingside Black can still put up tough resistance.

34. h5xg6 **f7xg6**
35. ♗c1-f4 ♕b8-b7
36. ♗f1-g2 ♖c8-f8?

The correct continuation was 36...♘xf4 37.♖xf4 ♖xd1+ 38.♕xd1 ♕e7. Now, however, d5 faces disaster.

37. ♖f3-d3 **g6-g5**
38. ♖d3xd5 **e6xd5**
39. ♖d1xd5 ♖d7-f7
40. ♖d5xc5 ♕b7-e7
41. ♖c5xf5 **g5xf4**
42. ♖f5xf4

1-0

Part 16, Chapter 86

Game 105
A.Petrisor – F.Berkes
Calimanesti 2016

1. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
2. e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
3. d2-d4 **d7-d6**
4. ♘g1-f3 ♗c8-g4
5. ♗f1-e2 **e7-e6**
6. c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
7. 0-0 ♗f8-e7
8. h2-h3 ♗g4-h5
9. e5xd6 **c7xd6**
10. ♗c1-e3 **0-0**
11. ♘b1-c3 **d6-d5**
12. c4-c5 ♗g4xf3
13. ♗e2xf3 ♘b6-c4
14. ♗e3-c1 ...



Diverging from 14.♗f4 in the note. This is nearly as popular as 14.♗f4. After b2-b3 the bishop can defend the d-pawn from b2.

14. ... ♘b8-c6
15. b2-b3 ♘c4-a5
16. ♗c1-b2 ♗e7-f6
17. ♘c3-a4 **b7-b5**

18. c5xb6 a7xb6
19. ♗f3-e2 ♖a8-b8

Black has zero problems. Now White should go for 20.♕d2 ♕d6 21.♖fc1 h6 22.g3 (countering ♗f6-g5), and the doubling of rooks on the open file will prompt exchanges.

20. ♗e2-b5 ♕d8-d6
21. ♕d1-d2 ♖f8-c8
22. ♖f1-d1 h7-h6
23. ♗b2-c3 ♘c6-a7
24. ♗c3-b4 ♕d6-d8
25. ♗b5-a6 ♖c8-c7
26. ♕d2-f4 ♗f6-e7
27. ♗b4xe7 ♖c7xe7
28. ♖d1-d3 ♕d8-c7
29. ♕f4-h4 ♘a5-c6
30. ♖d3-g3 d6-d5
31. ♘a4-c5 ♕c7-d6
32. a2-a4 e6-e5
33. d4xc5 ♕d6xc5



34. ♕h4xh6? ...

Petrisor had up to now complicated the game somewhat successfully, and after 34.♕f6! g6 35.e6! ♕d4 36.ef+ ♔f8 the position would be quite unclear. However, the Romanian master failed to cope with the tension.

34. ... g7-g6
35. ♖g3-g4? ...

White would have retained drawing chances after 35.♖c1 ♕d4 36.♗xb5 ♘xe5 37.♗f1.

35. ... ♕c5-c3

0-1

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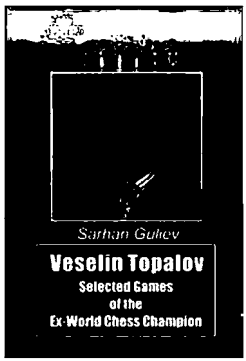
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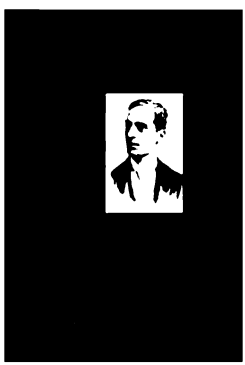
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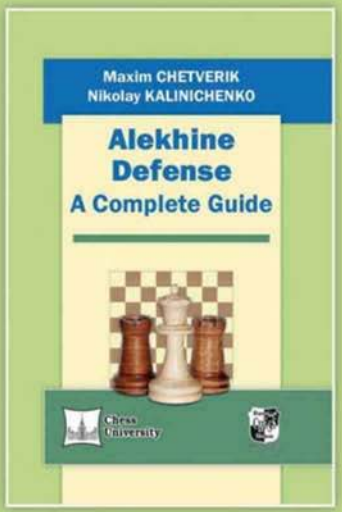
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This book, consisting of 16 parts and 87 chapters, not only covers the traditional Alekhine lines but also takes a comprehensive look at variations rooted firmly in the 21st century. Moreover, thanks to the use of modern technology and the authors' deep analysis the evaluations of many well-known lines have been revised.

The authors have strived to write a lively work which is useful for both players with high ELO ratings and club players.

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